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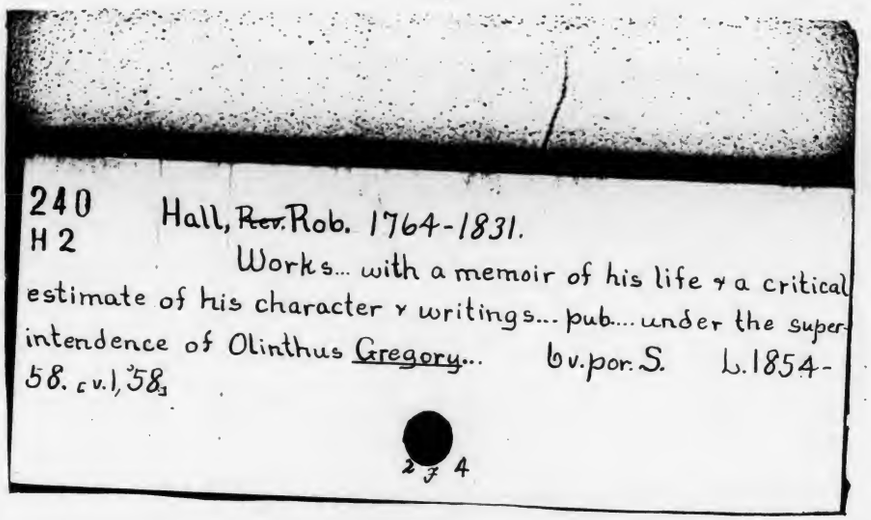
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GUIDE TO CONTENTS

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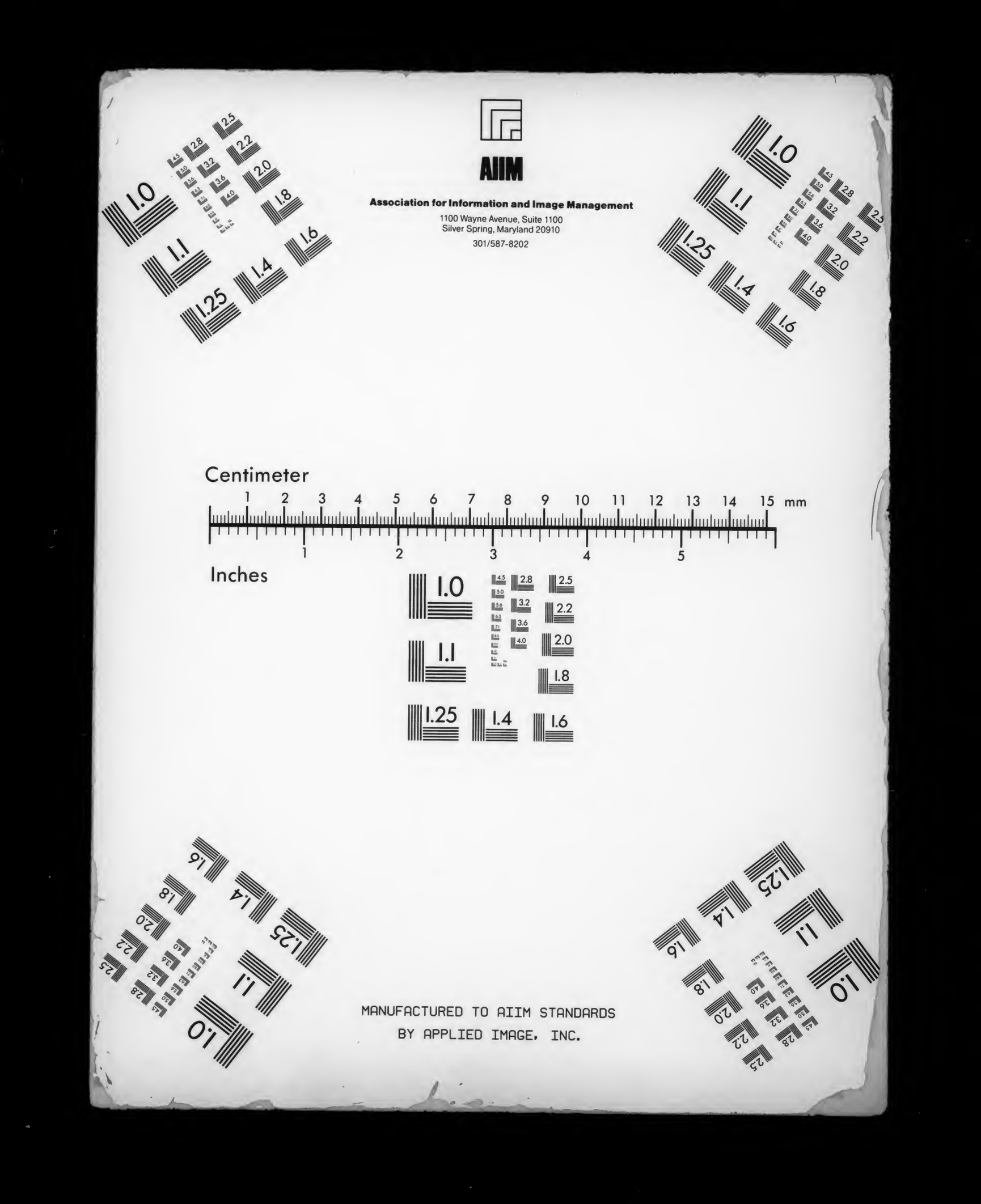
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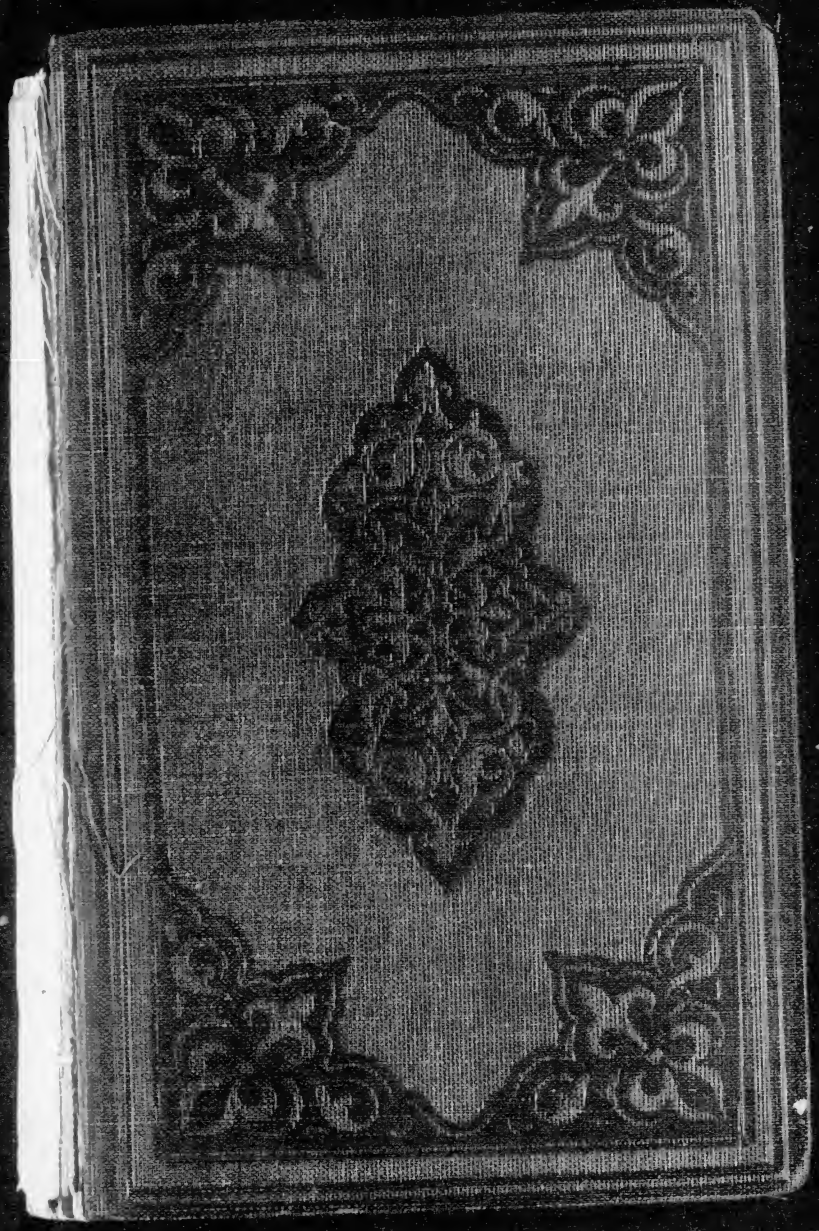

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THE WORKS

OF THE

REV. ROBERT HALL, A. M.

VOL. I.

BRIEF MEMOIR BY DR. GREGORY.

ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER AND WRITINGS, BY JOHN FOSTER

LETTERS, AND CIRCULAR LETTERS.

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Robert Hall

THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

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AND A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF [illegible] D WRITINGS.

[illegible] Volumes, 8vo.

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OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.

[illegible] MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.

VOL. I.

MEMOIR, LETTERS, AND CIRCULAR LETTERS.

LONDON

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1858

THE

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WITH

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AND A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER AND WRITINGS.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

Page.

A Brief Memoir of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M., by Dr. Gregory 1

Appendix.

Note A.—Miscellaneous Gleanings from Mr. Hall's Conversational Remarks . . . 159
B.—Quotations from the Writings of Sir James Mackintosh and Dr. Parr . . 178
C.—Character of Mr. Hall as a Preacher. By Mr. John Scott 186
D.—Extract of a Letter from Dr. Prichard . 190
E.—Sketches of Mr. Hall's character, especially in Private Life 191

Observations on Mr. Hall's Character as a Preacher. By John Foster 201

Letter to the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society 256
Note.—Serampore Missionaries.—Letter of Mr. Foster to Dr. Gregory 259

LETTERS.

I. To the Baptist Church, Broadmead, Bristol . 265
II. To the Rev. Isaiah Birt, Plymouth . . 266
III Accepting the Pastoral Charge of the Baptist Church at Cambridge 268

79500

		Page.
IV.	To Miss Wilkins, afterwards Mrs. Fysh, of Camberwell	268
V.	To Mrs. Fysh, of Camberwell, on the death of her Sister, Mrs. Parsons	271
VI.	To the Rev. James Phillips, Haverfordwest	273
VII.	To the Rev. James Phillips	275
VIII.	To the Rev. James Phillips	277
IX.	To Mrs. Tucker, Plymouth Dock	279
X.	To Mrs. Tucker	281
XI.	To Mr. Hewitt Fysh, Camberwell, on the Death of Mrs. Fysh	282
XII.	To Dr. Gregory.—Origin and Object of the Eclectic Review	285
XIII.	To William Hollick, Esq. of Whittlesford, near Cambridge.—On his own recovery from a severe Malady	*ib.*
XIV	To Dr. Gregory.—On the Certainty attending Religious Knowledge	287
XV.	To William Hollick, Esq.—On his Recovery from a second Attack	289
XVI.	To the Rev. James Phillips	291
XVII.	To the Church of Christ, of the Baptist Persuasion, in Cambridge.—On resigning the Pastoral Charge	292
XVIII.	The Baptist Church at Cambridge to the Rev. Robert Hall.—In Reply to the preceding	293
XIX.	To Mr. Newton Bosworth, Cambridge	295
XX.	To the Rev. James Phillips	297
XXI.	To the Rev. Dr. Cox	299
XXII.	To the Rev. Dr. Ryland	300
XXIII.	To the Rev. James Phillips	302
XXIV.	To a Friend in Perplexity as to his Religious State	*ib.*
XXV.	To the same	304
XXVI.	To the Rev. James Phillips	305
XXVII.	To Ebenezer Foster, Esq., Cambridge	307
XXVIII.	To the Rev. Josiah Hill	308
XXIX.	To William Hollick, Esq.—On the Death of Mrs. Hollick	309

		Page.
XXX.	To R. Foster, jun., Esq., Cambridge	31.
XXXI.	To Joseph Gutteridge, Esq., Denmark Hill, Camberwell	312
XXXII.	From Mr. Gutteridge to Mr. Hall.—Proposing that he should preach a Series of Lectures in London	*ib.*
XXXIII.	To Joseph Gutteridge, Esq.—In reply to the preceding	314
XXXIV.	To Joseph Gutteridge, Esq.—On the same Subject	316
XXXV.	To the Rev. James Phillips	317
XXXVI.	Extract of a Letter to Mrs. Angas, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	319
XXXVII.	To Mr. Newton Bosworth, Cambridge	320
XXXVIII.	To my young Friends of Mr. Edmonds's Congregation	321
XXXIX.	Extract from a Letter to the Rev. W. Button	322
XL.	To the Rev. James Phillips, Clapham.—On Occasion of the Death of his own Son	323
XLI.	To the Rev. W. Button	324
XLII.	To the Rev. Dr. Fletcher, of Blackburn, now of Stepney	325
XLIII.	To the Rev. Dr. Fletcher	326
XLIV.	To Dr. Ryland	328
XLV.	To Mr. Josiah Conder	329
XLVI.	To the Rev. W. Chaplin, Bishop Stortford	330
XLVII.	To Dr. Ryland	332
XLVIII.	Extract from a Letter to the Rev. W. Button	333
XLIX.	To the Rev. Thomas Grinfield, Clifton	*ib.*
L.	To Dr. Ryland.—On Public Missionary Meetings	334
LI.	To Dr. Ryland	336
LII.	To Dr. Ryland.—(Extract.)	337
LIII.	To the Rev. James Phillips	*ib.*
LIV.	To Dr. Gregory, on the death of Mr. Boswell Brandon Beddome	339
LV.	To the Rev. Thomas Langdon, Leeds	340
LVI.	To Dr. Ryland	342

		Page
LVII.	To William Hollick, Esq. . . .	343
LVIII.	Extract from a Letter to the Rev. W. Button	345
LIX.	To the Rev. James Phillips.—(Extract.) .	*ib.*
LX.	To the Rev. Thomas Grinfield. Clifton.—What Doctrines are Fundamental? .	346
LXI.	To the Rev. Joseph Ivimey, London .	348
LXII.	To Mrs. Tucker	349
LXIII.	To the Rev. Thomas Langdon . .	351
LXIV.	To a Gentleman at Trinity College, Cambridge. On Future Punishment . . .	352
LXV.	To Richard Foster, Jun. Esq. . .	354
LXVI.	To the Rev. Isaiah Birt . . .	355
LXVII.	To the Rev. Thomas Langdon, of Leeds.—On the death of his Daughter . . .	356
LXVIII.	To the Rev. Thomas Grinfield, Clifton.—On Hutchinsonianism	357
LXIX.	To the Rev. ——. In Reply to a Request to write a Review	358
LXX.	To Mr. J. E. Ryland.—(Extract.) . .	360
LXXI.	To Mrs. Langdon.—On the Death of her Husband	361
LXXII.	To J. B. Williams, Esq. Shrewsbury .	362
LXXIII.	To Mr. J. E. Ryland . . .	363
LXXIV.	To Mr. J. E. Ryland.—On Dr. Ryland's Death	365
LXXV.	To Mrs. Ryland.—On the same . .	*ib.*
LXXVI.	To Mr. Arthur Tozer, Bristol.—In reference to Mr. Hall's removal to Broadmead . .	366
LXXVII.	To the same	368
LXXVIII.	To the same	370
LXXIX.	To the same	372
LXXX.	To the Church of Christ assembling in Broadmead, Bristol	373
LXXXI.	To the Rev. P. J. Saffery, of Salisbury .	374
LXXXII.	To the Rev. Dr. J. P. Smith, Homerton .	375
LXXXIII.	To W. B. Gurney, Esq.—On the Death of Mrs. Gurney	377
LXXXIV.	To Ebenezer Foster, Esq. . . .	378

		Page
LXXXV.	To James Nutter, Esq. Shelford, near Cambridge	380
LXXXVI.	To Ebenezer Foster, Esq. Cambridge . .	382

CIRCULAR LETTERS.

On the Excellency of the Christian Dispensation . .	385
On the Work of the Holy Spirit	397
On Hearing the Word	419

A BRIEF MEMOIR

OF

THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A. M.

BY OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D.

A BRIEF MEMOIR

OF

THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A. M.

Robert Hall, whose Works are collected in the volumes now published, was born at Arnsby, a village about eight miles from Leicester, on the 2d of May, 1764. His father was descended from a respectable family of yeomanry in Northumberland, whence he removed to Arnsby in 1753, on being chosen the pastor of a Baptist congregation in that place. He was not a man of learning, but a man of correct judgement and solid piety, an eloquent and successful preacher of the gospel, and one of the first among the modern Baptists in our villages who aimed to bring them down from the heights of ultra-Calvinism to those views of religious truth which are sound, devotional, and practical. He was the author of several useful publications, of which one, the "Help to Zion's Travellers," has gone through several editions, and is still much and beneficially read, on account of its tendency to remove various frequently-urged objections against some momentous points of evangelical truth. He was often appointed to draw up the "Circular Letters" from the ministers and messengers of the Northampton Association. One of these letters, published in 1776, presents, in small compass, so able a defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, that it might be advantageously republished for more general circulation. This excellent man died in March, 1791. His character has been beautifully sketched by his son, who, in one sentence, while portraying his father, with equal accuracy

depicted himself:—"He appeared to the greatest advan-
"tage upon subjects where the faculties of most men
"fail them; for the natural element of his mind was
"greatness."

The wife of this valuable individual was a woman of sterling sense and distinguished piety. She died in December, 1776.

Robert was the youngest of fourteen children, six of whom survived their parents. Four of these were daughters, of whom three are still living; the other son, John, settled as a farmer at Arnsby, and died in 1806.

Robert, while an infant, was so delicate and feeble, that it was scarcely expected he would reach maturity. Until he was two years of age he could neither walk nor talk. He was carried about in the arms of a nurse, who was kept for him alone, and who was directed to take him close after the plough in the field, and at other times to the sheep-pen, from a persuasion, very prevalent in the midland counties, that the exhalations from newly ploughed land, and from sheep in the fold, are salubrious and strengthening. Adjacent to his father's dwelling house was a burial ground; and the nurse, a woman of integrity and intelligence, judging from his actions that he was desirous to learn the meaning of the inscriptions on the grave-stones, and of the various figures carved upon them, managed, by the aid of those inscriptions, to teach him the letters of the alphabet, then to group them into syllables and words, and thus, at length, to read and speak. No sooner was his tongue loosed by this unusual but efficient process, than his advance became constantly marked. Having acquired the ability to speak, his constitutional ardour at once appeared. He was incessantly asking questions, and became a great and a *rapid* talker. One day, when he was about three years old, on his expressing his disapprobation of some person who spoke quickly, his mother reminded him that *he* spoke very fast. "*No*," said he, "*I only keep at it.*"

Like many others who were born in villages, he received his first regular instructions (after he left his nurse's arms) at a dame's school. Dame *Scotton* had the

honour of being his first professional instructor. From her he was transferred to a Mrs. *Lyley*, in the same village. While under their care he evinced an extraordinary thirst for knowledge, and became a collector of books. In the summer season, after the school hours were over, he would put his richly prized library, among which was an Entick's Dictionary, into his pinafore, steal into the grave yard, (which, from an early and fixed association, he regarded as his study,) lie down upon the grass, spread his books around him, and there remain until the deepening shades of evening compelled him to retire into the house.

At about six years of age he was placed, as a day-scholar, under the charge of a Mr. *Simmons*, of Wigston, a village about four miles from Arnsby. At first, he walked to school in the mornings and home again in the evenings. But the severe pain in his back, from which he suffered so much through life, had even then begun to distress him; so that he was often obliged to lie down upon the road, and sometimes his brother John and his other school-fellows carried him, in turn, he repaying them during their labour by relating some amusing story, or detailing some of the interesting results of his reading. On his father's ascertaining his inability to walk so far daily, he took lodgings for him and his brother at the house of a friend in the village: after this arrangement was made they went to Wigston on the Monday mornings, and returned to Arnsby on the Saturday afternoons.

The course of instruction at Mr. Simmons's school was not very extensive: and Robert was not likely to restrict himself, as a student, to its limits. On starting from home on the Monday, it was his practice to take with him two or three books from his father's library, that he might read them in the intervals between the school hours. The books he selected were not those of mere amusement, but such as required deep and serious thought. The works of Jonathan Edwards, for example, were among his favourites; and it is an ascertained fact, that before he was nine years of age, he had perused and reperused, with intense interest, the treatises of that pro-

found and extraordinary thinker, on the "Affections," and on the "Will." About the same time, also, he read "Butler's Analogy" with considerable avidity. He used to ascribe his early predilection for this class of studies, in great measure, to his intimate association, in mere childhood, with a tailor, one of his father's congregation, a very shrewd, well-informed man, and an acute metaphysician. Before he was ten years old, he had written many essays, principally on religious subjects; and often invited his brother and sisters to hear him preach. About this time, too, in one of those anticipatory distributions of a father's property, which, I apprehend, are not unusual with boys, he proposed that his brother should have the cows, sheep, and pigs, on their father's death, and leave him "all the books."

He remained at Mr. Simmons's school until he was eleven years of age, when this conscientious master informed the father that he was quite unable to keep pace with his pupil, declaring that he had been often obliged to sit up all night to prepare the lessons for the morning; a practice he could no longer continue, and must therefore relinquish his favourite scholar.

The proofs of extraordinary talent and devotional feeling, which Robert had now for some time exhibited, not only gratified his excellent parents, but seemed to mark the expediency and propriety of devoting him to the sacred office; but the delicate health of his son, and the narrow means of the father, occasioned some perplexity. Mr. Hall, therefore, took his son to Kettering, in order that he might avail himself of the advice of an influential and valued friend residing there, Mr. Beeby Wallis. Their interview soon led to the choice of a suitable boarding school; but the pallid and sickly appearance of the boy exciting Mr. Wallis's sympathy, he prevailed upon his father to leave him at his house for a few weeks, in the hope that change of air would improve his health. This gentleman was so greatly astonished at the precocity of talent of his youthful visitor, that he several times requested him to deliver a short address to a select auditory invited for the purpose. He often

afterwards adverted to the injury that he suffered from this incongruous elevation. "Mr. Wallis," said he, "was "one whom every body loved. He belonged to a family "in which probity, candour, and benevolence, consti- "tuted the general likeness: but conceive, Sir, if you "can, the egregious impropriety of setting a boy of eleven "to preach to a company of grave gentlemen, full half "of whom wore wigs. I never call the circumstance to "mind but with grief at the vanity it inspired; nor, "when I think of such mistakes of good men, am I "inclined to question the correctness of Baxter's lan- "guage, strong as it is, where he says, 'Nor should men "turn preachers as the river Nilus breeds frogs (saith "Herodotus), when one half *moveth* before the other is "*made*, and while it is yet *but plain mud!*'"*

Robert's health appearing much improved from his short residence at Kettering, he was placed by his father as a boarder, at the school of the Rev. *John Ryland*, in the neighbouring town of Northampton. Mr. Ryland was a very extraordinary man, whose excellencies and eccentricities were strangely balanced. In him were blended the ardour and vehemence of Whitfield, with the intrepidity of Luther. His pulpit oratory was of the boldest character, and singularly impressive, when he did not overstep the proprieties of the ministerial function. In his school he was both loved and feared; his prevailing kindness and benevolence exciting affection, while his stern determination to *do* what was right, as well as to *require* what he *thought* right, too often kept alive among his pupils a sentiment of apprehension and alarm. So far as I can learn, from several who had been under his care, he taught Greek better than Latin, and the rudiments of mathematical science with more success than those of grammar and the languages. His pupils never forgot his manner of explaining the doctrine and application of ratios and proportions; and they who had ever formed a part of his "living orrery," by which he incorporated the elements of the solar system among the amusements of the play-

* Saint's Rest, Preface to Part II. original edition.

ground, obtained a knowledge of that class of facts which they seldom, if ever, lost. They were strenuously encouraged to engage in the several athletic exercises in which school-boys delight. These seem, in a degree, to have improved the constitution of the subject of this narrative. He gave himself to them most heartily; and it was uniformly found that in those which required a strong effort for a short time, he was the most successful: thus, when he contended with the swiftest runners, though they got in advance of him on level ground, he was always *first* when they ran up a hill.

Our youthful student remained under Mr. Ryland's care but little more than a year and a half; during which, however, according to his father's testimony, "he made great progress in Latin and Greek;" while, in his own judgement, the principle of emulation was called into full activity, the habit of composition was brought into useful exercise, the leading principles of abstract science were collected, and a thirst for knowledge of every kind acquired. It should also be mentioned here, that it was during the time Robert was Mr. Ryland's pupil, that he heard a sermon preached at Northampton, by Mr. *Robins*, of Daventry, whose religious instruction, conveyed "in language of the most classic purity," at once "impressive and delightful," excited his early relish for chaste and elegant composition.*

From the time he quitted Northampton until he entered the "Bristol Education Society," or academy, for the instruction of young men preparing for the ministerial office among the Baptists, he studied divinity, and some collateral subjects, principally under the guidance of his father, with occasional hints from his acute metaphysical friend, still residing in the same village. It is recorded in the "Church Book" that in "1778, On "Lord's day, Aug. 23d, Robert Hall, youngest son of our "pastor, Robert Hall, gave a very distinct account of his "being the subject of special grace. He was but four-"teen years of age last May; has appeared to be serious "from his early childhood. He was baptized on Lord's

* See the Memoir of Mr. Tolles, in a subsequent volume.

"day, Sept. 6th, and the same day was added to the "church."

Having thus given satisfactory proofs of his piety, and evinced a strong predilection for the pastoral office, he was placed at the Bristol Institution, upon Dr. Ward's foundation, in October, 1778, being then in his fifteenth year. He remained there until the autumn of 1781, when the president of the institution reported to the general meeting of subscribers and friends, that "two "pupils, Messrs. Stennett and Hall, had been continued "upon Dr. Ward's exhibition, but were now preparing "to set out for Scotland, according to the Doctor's will."

The Bristol Academy, when Mr. Hall first joined it, was under the superintendence of the Rev. Hugh Evans, who was shortly afterwards succeeded by his son, Dr. *Caleb Evans*, both as president of the institution, and as pastor of the Baptist church in Broadmead. The Rev. *James Newton* was the classical tutor. Under these able men he pursued his studies with great ardour and perseverance. He became an early riser; and it was remarked in consequence, that he was often ready to attend the tutor for the morning lessons, before some of his fellow-students had commenced their preparation.

His sentiments at this time respecting his theological tutor, and the importance of his studies in general, may be gathered from the subjoined extracts from two letters to his father, both written before July 1780.

"Dr. Evans is a most amiable person in every respect: as a man, generous and open-hearted; as a christian, lively and spiritual; as a preacher, pathetic and fervent; and as a tutor, gentle, meek, and condescending. I can truly say that he has, on all occasions, behaved to me with the tenderness and affection of a parent, whom I am bound by the most endearing ties to hold in everlasting honour and esteem.

"Through the goodness of God, of whom in all things I desire to be continually mindful, my pursuits of knowledge afford me increasing pleasure, and lay open fresh sources of improvement and entertainment. That branch of wisdom in which, above all others, I wish and crave your assistance is *divinity*, of all others the most interesting and important.

It is the height of my ambition, that in some happy period of my life, my lot may be cast near you, when I may have the unspeakable pleasure of consulting, on different subjects, you, whose judgment I esteem not less than an oracle.

"We, poor, short-sighted creatures, are ready to apprehend that we know all things, before we know anything; whereas it is a great part of knowledge to know that we know nothing. Could we behold the vast depths of unfathomed science, or glance into the dark recesses of hidden knowledge, we should be ready to tremble at the precipice, and cry out—'Who is sufficient for these things?'"

The system of instruction at Bristol, comprehended not merely the learned languages and the rudiments of science, but a specific course of preparation for the ministerial office, including the habit of public speaking. Essays and theses on appropriate topics, were written under the direction of the tutors: religious exercises were carefully attended to; and the students were appointed, in turn, to speak or preach upon subjects selected by the president. Among the books first put into Mr. Hall's hands to prepare him for these exercises, was Gibbons's Rhetoric, which he read with the utmost avidity, and often mentioned in after life, as rekindling the emotion excited by Mr. Robins's preaching, improving his sensibility to the utility as well as beauty of fine writing, and creating an intense solicitude to acquire an elegant as well as a perspicuous style. He was, therefore, more diligent in this department of academical labour than many of his fellow-students. Usually, however, after his written compositions had answered the purpose for which they were prepared, he made no effort to preserve them; but either carelessly threw them aside, or gave them to such of his associates as expressed any desire to possess them. Some of these early productions are still extant; but the only one which I have been able to obtain is an essay on "Ambition," in which there is more of the tumultuary flourish of the mere orator, than he would ever have approved after he reached his twentieth year. Nor was it correct in sentiment. The sole species of excellence recommended to be pursued was superiority of intellect; all moral qualities, as well as

actions, directed to the promotion of human welfare, being entirely overlooked.

Indeed there is reason to apprehend that at this period of his life, Mr. Hall, notwithstanding the correctness and excellence of his general principles, and the regularity of his devotional habits, had set too high an estimate on merely intellectual attainments, and valued himself, not more perhaps than was natural to youth, yet too much, on the extent of his mental possessions. No wonder, then, that he should experience salutary mortification. And thus it happened. On one of the occasions when he was appointed, agreeably to the arrangement already mentioned, to deliver an address in the vestry of Broadmead meeting-house, the passage selected for him by the tutor, was 1 Tim. iv. 10:—"Therefore, we both labour "and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, "who is the Saviour of all men; specially of those "who believe." After proceeding, for a short time, much to the gratification of his auditory, he suddenly paused, covered his face with his hands, exclaimed, "Oh! I "have lost all my ideas," and sat down, his hands still hiding his face. The failure, however, painful as it was to his tutors, and humiliating to himself, was such as rather augmented than diminished their persuasion of what he could accomplish, if he once acquired self-possession. He was, therefore, appointed to speak again, on the same subject, at the same place, the ensuing week. This second attempt was accompanied by a second failure, still more painful to witness, and still more grievous to bear. He hastened from the vestry, and on retiring to his room, exclaimed, "If *this* does not humble me, the "devil *must* have me!" Such was the result of one of the early efforts of him whose humility afterwards became as conspicuous as his talents, and who, for nearly half a century, excited universal attention and admiration by the splendour of his pulpit eloquence.

Our student spent the first summer vacation after his entering the Bristol institution, under the paternal roof at Arnsby; and, in the course of that residence at home, accompanied his father to some public religious services

at Clipstone, a village in Northamptonshire. Mr. Hall, senior, and Mr. Beddome, of Bourton, well known by his Hymns, and his truly valuable Sermons, were both engaged to preach. But, the latter, being much struck with the appearance, and some of the remarks, of the son of his friend, was exceedingly anxious that *he* should preach in the evening, and proposed to relinquish his own engagement, rather than be disappointed. To this injudicious proposal, after resisting every importunity for some time, he at length yielded; and entered the pulpit to address an auditory of *ministers*, many of whom he had been accustomed from his infancy to regard with the utmost reverence. He selected for his text, 1 John i. 5, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and it is affirmed, treated this mysterious and awful subject with such metaphysical acumen, and drew from it such an impressive application, as excited the deepest interest.

On the arrival of the summer vacation, in 1780, he again visited Arnsby; and during the period he then remained at home, his father became fully satisfied that his piety was genuine, as well as that his qualifications for the office of a preacher were of a high order. He therefore expressed to many of his friends his desire that he should be "set apart to the sacred work." Yet solicitous not to be led aside from a correct judgement by the partiality of a father, he resolved that the church over which he was pastor, should judge of his son's fitness, and recognise their conviction by a solemn act. The members of the church, after cautious and deliberate inquiry, ratified the decision of the anxious parent, and earnestly and unanimously requested "that "Robert Hall, jun., might be set apart to public em-"ploy."

"Accordingly," as the following extract from 'the Church-book' testifies, on the 13th of August, 1780, "he was examined by his father before the church, "respecting his inclination, motives, and end, in refer-"ence to the ministry, and was likewise desired to "make a declaration of his religious sentiments. All "which being done to the entire satisfaction of the

"church,* they therefore set him apart by lifting up their "right hands, and by solemn prayer.

"His father then delivered a discourse to him from "2 Tim. ii. 1. '*Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the "grace that is in Christ Jesus.*' Being thus sent forth, "he preached in the afternoon from 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. "'*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his "mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them*

* As the words *church, deacon*, &c. when used by congregational dissenters, whether baptist, or pædobaptist, are employed in senses differing from what are current among episcopalians, I annex this brief note to prevent misconception.

Among the orthodox dissenters of the class just specified, a distinction is always made between a church and a congregation. A *congregation* includes the whole of an assembly collected in one place of worship, and may therefore comprehend not merely real christians, but nominal christians, and it may be, unbelievers, who, from various motives, often attend public worship. The *church* is constituted of that portion of these, who, after cautious investigation, are believed, in the exercise of judgement and charity, to be real christians. It is regarded as the duty of such to unite themselves in fellowship with a church, and conform to its rules; and the admission is by the suffrage of the members of the respective *church*; its connected congregation having no voice in this matter. A christian church is regarded as a voluntary society, into which the members are incorporated under the authority of Christ, whose laws they engage to obey, for the important purposes of promoting the mutual improvement of those who compose it, by an orderly discharge of religious duties, and of bringing others to the knowledge of the truth. Every such church of Christ is considered as an independent society, having a right to enjoy its own sentiments, to choose its own officers, maintain its own discipline, admit members, or expel them on persisting in conduct unworthy of the christian profession; without being controlled or called to an account by any others whatever.

Such a church, as a christian community, observes the Sacrament, or "Communion of the body and blood of Christ," at stated seasons; the members of other churches being admissible, with the consent of the members present, on any specific occasion.

The officers of such a church consist of bishops or presbyters (i. e. pastors) and deacons. The latter are not, as in the church of England, and among other episcopalians, an order of the clergy, but are *laymen*. They are chosen from among the members of the church, and their business is "to see that the table of the Lord, the table of the poor, and the table of the minister be supplied." They attend to the secular concerns of the church, as a body, and to all that relates to the convenience of the society, in reference to their public meeting. In many societies, too, they assist the pastor in his general superintendence. They usually trace their institution, as, indeed, do the episcopalians, but both, in my judgement, fallaciously, from Ac's vi. 1—6. I suspect that neither deacons among episcopalians, nor those among congregationalists, accord very accurately with the primitive pattern.

" *that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our* " *Lord Jesus Christ.*'—May the Lord bless him, and " grant him great success !"

It is worthy of observation that, on this solemn occasion, as well as when he preached at Clipstone, Mr. Hall selected texts of the class most calculated to elicit those peculiar powers for which he was through life distinguished.

In little more than a year after Mr. Hall had been thus publicly designated a preacher of the gospel, having pursued his studies at Bristol with great assiduity and corresponding success, he was, as already hinted, appointed to King's College, Aberdeen, on Dr. Ward's foundation. In his journey thither, he was accompanied by Mr. Joseph Stennett, the son of the late Rev. Dr. Stennett, and another student, Mr. John Pownall, still living. The two former of these had letters to the venerable Dr. John Erskine of Edinburgh ; and he again supplied them with introductions to two eminent individuals at Aberdeen. This appears from a letter sent by the doctor, 2d Nov. 1781, to Mr. Ryland of Northampton ; from which, as it exhibits his view of the state of things at Aberdeen, at that period, I present a brief extract.

" I had the pleasure of your letter by Messrs. Stennett and Hall last week. They appear to me pleasant young men, and I should have been happy to have had further opportunities of showing my regard to the children of so worthy parents, than their short stay here allowed. Though there are many excellent teachers at Aberdeen, and both they and the ministers are remarkable for purity of morals, I have some fears, from different accounts, that the general strain of preaching there is less evangelical than in several pulpits in Glasgow or Edinburgh. Principal Campbell and Dr. Beattie are, in my opinion, able and worthy men ; and my difference with the first, as to the American War and the Popish Bill, has not impaired our mutual esteem. I wrote letters to introduce the young gentlemen to both."

Mr. Hall, for many years afterwards, used often to speak of the affectionate attentions of Dr. Erskine, on this occasion ; and of his own feelings, when, on taking leave, the venerable man of God exhorted him to self-

vigilance, kissed him, laid his hand upon his head, blessing him, and commending him to the watchful care of the great Head of the Church.

At the time when he went to Aberdeen, the reputation of the two colleges, King's and Marischal College, was almost equally balanced. At the latter, Principal Campbell and Dr. Beattie, Professor of Moral Philosophy, had attained a high and merited celebrity, both on account of their lectures and their writings : while at King's College, the Divinity lectures of Dr. Gerard were much and greatly esteemed ; and some of the other professors were men of eminence. Many, therefore, especially of the divinity students, attended the appropriate lectures at the two colleges.*

Mr. Hall, in a letter addressed to his deservedly prized friend, the late Dr. Ryland, towards the end of this first session at college, speaks thus of his studies and of two of the professors :—

" We entered the Greek class under Mr. Leslie, who, though a man of no apparent brightness of parts, is, notwithstanding, well fitted for his office, being a good grammarian, and attentive to the interests of his pupils. We have been employed in the class in going over, more accurately, the principles of the Greek language, and reading select passages in Xenophon and Homer : and I have privately read through Xenophon's Anabasis, and Memorabilia of Socrates, several books of Homer, and some of the Greek Testament ; and am now reading *Longini de Sublimate liber*, which I hope to finish next week."

In the same letter he mentions his reading with Professor Ogilvie, whose versions of the Latin poets he characterizes as " extremely elegant." He laments the

* At King's College, during Mr. Hall's studies there, Mr. John Leslie was Professor of Greek ; Mr. Roderick Macleod, Professor of Philosophy, including Mathematics ; Mr. W. Ogilvie, Professor of Humanity ; Mr. James Dunbar, Professor of Moral Philosophy ; and Dr. Alexander Gerard, Professor of Divinity. Though some of these were highly distinguished men, Dr. Gerard was most known to the world of English literature. Among his works are " An Essay on Genius," " An Essay on Taste," two volumes of valuable Sermons, and his " Lectures on the Pastoral Care," published in 1799 by his son, Dr Gilbert Gerard.

want of religious advantages in this seat of learning, and deplores the profanity and profligacy of many of the students; one of whom, he assures his friend, affirmed that he knew no use even in the word "God," except to give point to an oath! To make up for this sad deficiency, he adds, "we have found some agreeable acquaintances in the New Town, and among them the sister of Mr. Cruden, the author of the Concordance!"

The same letter contains evidence that he did not confine his attention solely to classical and mathematical studies. After expressing his admiration of the devotional as well as rational spirit that "lives and breathes in every page of Edwards," he adds:

"My thoughts are at present too much immersed in literary exercises to admit of long or close application of thought to any thing else. I have, however, been thinking a little on the distinction of *natural* and *moral ability*, and have in my mind an objection, upon which I should be glad to have your thoughts. It is briefly this: If, according to Edwards, the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding, and if it be determined, directed, and biassed by the view of the understanding, what room then is left for any notion of moral ability, as distinct from natural? or how can there, in this case, be any depravity of the will, without supposing a prior defect in the understanding? Since the will, if it be wrong in its bias, is first led to that bias by the understanding; and where then the possibility of a *moral inability* consisting with a *natural ability*? This I hope to have some conversation with you upon, when I have the happiness of seeing you. I have with me Edwards on the Will, and have lately perused it often; and the more I read it, the more I admire.'

The lamented death of Sir James Mackintosh has left a blank which none can adequately fill, with regard to Mr. Hall's character, habits, and the developement of his intellectual powers at this period. On application, however, to an esteemed friend, the late Professor Paul, he kindly communicated a few particulars, which I shall give in his own language.

"What I now transmit is drawn from the College records, from the recollection of Dr. Jack, Principal of King's College, and formerly for three years a class-fellow of Mr. Hall, and from my own knowledge; for I, also, was a contemporary of Mr. Hall, having commenced my first year's studies when he commenced his fourth. It appears from the album that Mr. Hall entered college in the beginning of November, 1781. His first year was spent principally under the tuition of Mr. Professor Leslie, in the acquisition of the Greek language; his second, third, and fourth years under that of Mr. Professor Macleod, when he studied mathematics, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy. He took his degree in arts (i. e. A. M. degree) on the 30th of March, 1785. Principal Jack says that he attended the Professor of Humanity, Mr. Ogilvie, during the four years he was at college, both for Latin and Natural History; but, as there is no record of the students of the humanity and natural history classes, this fact depends wholly on the Principal's recollection. I learn from the same source that Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Hall, while at college, read a great deal of Greek in private, and that their reputation was high among their fellow-students for their attainments in that language. Principal Jack also bears testimony to Mr. Hall's great success in his mathematical and philosophical studies, and affirms that he was the first scholar of his class, in the various branches of education taught at college. During one of the sessions the Principal was member of a select literary society, consisting of only eight or ten students, of which society Sir James and Mr. Hall were the distinguished ornaments. None of Mr. Hall's college exercises are now to be found in this place; but my impressions correspond with those of the Principal, that his acquirements were of the very first order; and as Sir James had left college before I entered, having received his A.M. degree 30th March, 1784, there was no one at college in my time who could be at all put in competition with Mr. Hall. But it was not as a scholar alone that Mr. Hall's reputation was great at college. He was considered by all the students as a model of correct and regular deportment, of religious and moral habits, of friendly and benevolent affections."

To this concise summary, I subjoin the few particulars which I gathered from Sir James Mackintosh himself.

When these two eminent men first became acquainted, Sir James was in his eighteenth year, Mr. Hall about a year older. Sir James described Mr. Hall, as attracting

notice by a most ingenuous and intelligent countenance, by the liveliness of his manner, and by such indications of mental activity as could not be misinterpreted. His appearance was that of health, yet not of robust health; and he often suffered from paroxysms of pain, during which he would roll about on the carpet, in the utmost agony; but no sooner had the pain subsided than he would resume his part in conversation with as much cheerfulness and vivacity as before he had been thus interrupted. Sir James said he became attached to Mr. Hall, "because he could not help it." There wanted many of the supposed constituents of friendship. Their tastes at the commencement of their intercourse, were widely different; and upon most of the important topics of inquiry, there was no congeniality of sentiment: yet notwithstanding this, the *substratum* of their minds seemed of the same cast, and upon this, Sir James thought, the edifice of their mutual regard first rested. Yet he, ere long, became fascinated by his brilliancy and acumen, in love with his cordiality and ardour, and "awe-struck" (I think that was the term employed) by the transparency of his conduct and the purity of his principles. They read together; they sat together at lecture, if possible; they walked together. In their joint studies, they read much of Xenophon and Herodotus, and more of Plato; and so well was all this known, exciting admiration in some, in others envy, that it was not unusual, as they went along, for their class-fellows to point at them and say, "*There go Plato and Hērodōtus.*" But the arena in which they met most frequently was that of morals and metaphysics; furnishing topics of incessant disputation. After having sharpened their weapons by reading, they often repaired to the spacious sands upon the sea shore, and still more frequently to the picturesque scenery on the banks of the Don, above the old town, to discuss with eagerness the various subjects to which their attention had been directed. There was scarcely an important position in Berkeley's Minute Philosopher, in Butler's Analogy, or in Edwards on the Will, over which they had not thus debated with the utmost

intensity. Night after night, nay, month after month, for two sessions, they met only to study or to dispute; yet no unkindly feeling ensued. The process seemed rather, like blows in that of welding iron, to knit them closer together. Sir James said, that his companion as well as himself often contended for victory, yet never, so far as he could then judge, did either of them make a voluntary sacrifice of truth, or stoop to draw to and fro the *serra λογομαχίας*, as is too often the case with ordinary controvertists. From these discussions and from subsequent meditation upon them, Sir James learnt more *as to principles* (such, at least, he assured me, was his deliberate conviction) than from all the books he ever read. On the other hand, Mr. Hall through life reiterated his persuasion, that his friend possessed an intellect more analogous to that of Bacon than any person of modern times; and that if he had devoted his powerful understanding to metaphysics, instead of law and politics, he would have thrown an unusual light upon that intricate but valuable region of inquiry. Such was the cordial, reciprocal testimony of these two distinguished men. And, in many respects—latterly, I hope and believe, in *all* the most essential—it might be truly said of both, "As face answereth to face in a glass, so does the heart of a man to his friend."

It will be seen, from the first of a series of letters inserted in this volume, that, shortly after Mr. Hall's return to Aberdeen in November, 1783, he received an invitation from the church at Broadmead, to associate himself with Dr. Caleb Evans, as the assistant pastor; an invitation which he accepted with much doubt and diffidence. After some correspondence it was arranged that Mr. Hall should reside at Bristol, in the interval (of nearly six months) between the college sessions of 1784 and 1785, and then return to Aberdeen to complete his course. In this important session, from the beginning of November 1784 to May 1785, he seems to have devoted himself most sedulously to his studies; especially the Greek language, with moral and intellectual philosophy, and those other departments of inquiry

which are most intimately related to theology. During the session, too, he attended Dr. Campbell's lectures at Marischal College, and frequently profited by the Doctor's expository discourses, delivered once each fortnight; while he generally attended public worship at the church where Mr. Abercromby and Mr. Peters, both regarded as holding correct sentiments, were the alternate preachers. He had now lost his chosen companion, the sharpener of his faculties, by animated yet friendly debate; and he sought for no substitute in society, but resolved to turn the deprivation into a benefit by a more arduous application to his literary pursuits, and by cultivating habits of meditation. "I now," said he, in a letter to his father, "find retirement prodigiously sweet, and here I am "entirely uninterrupted and left to my own thoughts." In this disposition he commenced and concluded the session.

By the time Mr. Hall had thus completed his academical course, his mental powers, originally strong, had attained an extraordinary vigour; and, with the exception of the Hebrew language, of which he then knew nothing, he had become rich in literary, intellectual, and biblical acquisition. On resuming his labours at Broadmead, in conjunction with Dr. Evans, his preaching excited an unusual attention, the place of worship was often crowded to excess, and many of the most distinguished men in Bristol, including several clergymen, were among his occasional auditors.

This popularity not only continued, but increased, until he removed to another sphere of action. The brilliancy and force of his eloquence were universally acknowledged, while, in private life, his instructive and fascinating conversation drew equal admiration. Yet it ought not to be concealed (for I simply announce his own deliberate conviction, frequently expressed in after-life) that at this time he was very inadequately qualified for the duties of a minister of the gospel. He had, it is true, firmly embraced and cordially relied upon those fundamental truths which are comprehended in the declaration, "He that cometh unto God must believe that He *is*, and "that He is the *rewarder* of them that diligently seek

"him:" and he often expatiated, with much originality and beauty, upon the divine attributes, and constantly exhorted men to adhere closely to the path of duty; yet, not often from the higher, namely, the evangelical motives, to pure, and benevolent, and holy conduct. His knowledge of Christianity, as a system of restoration and reconciliation, was comparatively defective and obscure; and he felt but little alive to those peculiarities of the new dispensation, upon which, in maturer life, he loved to dwell. In his preaching he dealt too much in generalities, or enlarged upon topics which, though in a certain sense noble and inspiring, and thus calculated to elevate the mind, did not immediately flow from the great scheme of redemption, which it was his especial office to disclose. The extent of God's matchless love and mercy—the depth of the mystery of his designs—the inexhaustible treasury of his blessings and graces—the wonderful benefits flowing from the incarnation, humiliation, and sacrifice of the Son of God—the delightful privileges of the saints,—were themes to which he recurred far less frequently than in latter days; and he persuaded himself that this was not *very* wrong, because his colleague, Dr. Evans, who had "the care of the church," adverted so incessantly to the doctrines of our Lord's divinity and atonement, of spiritual influence and regeneration, as to leave room for *him* to explore other regions of instruction and interest.

It is possible that Mr. Hall, from his habit of self-depreciation, may have a little overcharged this picture: yet the notes of several of his sermons, preached from 1785 to 1789, taken down by one of the congregation, and which are now in my possession, confirm, to a considerable extent, the existence of the serious defect which he subsequently so much deplored.

Considering his early age, twenty-one, it was manifestly unfavourable to the correct developement of his character *as a preacher*, that in August 1785, only three months after his quitting Aberdeen, he was appointed classical tutor in the Bristol Academy, on the resignation of Mr. Newton. That additional appointment he held

for more than five years, and discharged its duties with marked zeal and activity, and with commensurate success. At this period of his life he was celebrated as a satirist, and would overwhelm such of his associates as tempted him to the use of those formidable weapons, with wit and raillery, not always playful. Aware, however, that this propensity was calculated to render him unamiable, and to give permanent pain to others, (a result which the generosity of his disposition made him anxious to avoid,) he endeavoured to impose a restraint upon himself, by writing the Essay on the "Character of Cleander;"* in which he exposes, with just severity, that species of sarcasm to which he believed himself most prone, and thus, by its publication, gave to others the opportunity, when he slid into this practice, of reproving him in his own language.

It seems to have been remarkably, and doubtless, mercifully, overruled, that, during this period of Mr. Hall's history, though his more judicious and wise friends were often grieved by the free and daring speculations which he advanced in private, he never promulgated direct and positive error from the pulpit. And thus they who were filled with apprehension on account of sallies in conversation, would listen with delight to his public addresses. This will be evinced by a few extracts from the Journals of two of his constant friends.

Mr. *Fuller* writes. "1784, May 7. Heard Mr. Robert Hall, jun., from 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' Felt very solemn in hearing some parts.—The Lord keep that young man!"

Again, "1785, June 14. Taken up with the company of Mr. Robert Hall, jun.; feel much pain for him. The Lord, in mercy to him and his churches in this country, keep him in the path of truth and righteousness."

In like manner, Dr. *Ryland*. "June 8, 1785. Robert Hall, jun., preached wonderfully from Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.' I

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Again, "June 15. Rode to Clipstone to attend the ministers' meeting. R. Hall, jun., preached a glorious sermon on the immutability of God, from James i. 17, 'The Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.'"

Again, "1785, July 11. Wrote to Robert Hall, jun., this day, respecting his conversation at Birmingham, on his last journey to Bristol. Endeavoured to be as close as ever I could, but I hope with much tenderness. His father sends me word that he has been ill: I hope God means to do him good *by this complaint in his side.*"

Again, "1786, June 13. Sent off a letter to Robert Hall, jun., which I wrote chiefly in answer to one of his some months ago, wherein he replied to mine concerning some disagreeable reports from Birmingham: added some new hints respecting another matter lately reported. O that God may keep that young man in the way of truth and holiness!"

It hence appears that Dr. Ryland, who was nearly twelve years older than Mr. Hall, and had known him from his childhood, did not rest satisfied with silent lamentations. This excellent man, fearing that his young friend was about to precipitate himself into a very dangerous course, sought by kind but strong expostulation to rescue him from the peril; and thus addressed him.

"My very dear Friend,

"The fullest consciousness that I have a right to call you so, as really feeling an earnest and tender concern for your welfare, and the recollection that you apparently allowed it when I last saw you, encourages me to write to you; though I may as well tell you at once that I am going to write to you in the same strain of complaint and censure which I have been constrained to use before. And indeed my fears and grief were never excited to such a degree concerning you as they now are. I still hope, however, you have much love to God; and I trust so much conviction of my sincere friendship, that you will not say of me as one said of Micaiah, 'I hate him, for he is always saying evil of me.' Indeed, the things that grieve me I shall industriously conceal from every body as long as I can; but I fear they will spread fast

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enough: for if you openly utter all your mind, there are not many who will mourn in secret over the report."

"It gave me extreme uneasiness to hear, this week, of the general disgust you have given to your former friends at Birmingham, on your last visit. Verily I wish that neither you, nor I, nor others, may fight for the truth with infernal weapons. I would wish to feel in my inmost soul the tenderest pity for the most erroneous men in the world, and to show all proper respect to men of science, and men who are regular in their outward conduct. Nor should I at all approve of violent or harsh language, or like to speak my opinion of the state of individuals. But at the same time I cannot but think that the lusts of the *mind* may as effectually ruin a man as 'the lusts of the *flesh*.' And I must get a good way toward Socinianism myself before I can have any strong hope that a Socinian, living and dying such, will see the kingdom of God. When the merciful Jesus declared, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' &c., I cannot believe that he meant simply, that he shall be saved who believes *that Jesus was not an impostor*, and who believes the *Doctrine of the Resurrection*. But these two articles are, I believe, the whole of Dr. Priestley's Christianity; and if once I were to think this Christianity enough to carry a man to heaven, I should not, I fear, be very strenuous in my endeavours to convince men of the danger of self-righteousness, and the necessity of a reliance on the Atonement. Oh! my dear friend, can I conceive that your mind was deeply impressed with a sense of the divine purity and the justice of God's law, when you could utter so vain and vile a speech as this?"

The Doctor then cites the language imputed to Mr. Hall. It implied that if he were the Judge of all, he could not condemn Dr. Priestley. After animadverting strongly upon the phrase which he understood was actually employed, he proceeds thus:—

"It is, I am sure, not malevolence, but sincere love, that makes me jealous of you. May the Lord keep you! I wish you would look over afresh the Epistle to the Galatians, and examine whether your charity is as chaste as Paul's. I allude to a proverb you have doubtless heard—'Charity is an angel, while she rejoiceth in the truth, a harlot when she rejoiceth in iniquity;'—embracing those whom she should rather pity and weep over.

"Study to enter into the very spirit of Paul's discourse,

1 Cor. i. 18—31, or Gal. ii. 15—21; and if this is consistent with supposing it would be unfair for God to punish any man for rejecting the Gospel, who understood chemistry and philosophy, why, then, retain your favourable opinion of the safety of Socinians?

"Receive this as a proof of the affection with which I am

"Your faithful friend,

"J. Ryland."

Many high-spirited young men, we can readily imagine, would have treated such a letter as this with contempt; while others would have replied to it in a lofty tone of surprise and indignation. But Dr. Ryland's young friend, notwithstanding the errors into which his impetuosity had hurried him, had too much generosity to regard as insulting what he knew was dictated by affection; and, therefore, anxious to show that he could bear reproof, and be thankful for it, he promptly replied:

"My dear Friend,

"I have just received your letter, and think it of so much importance as to deserve an immediate answer. Accordingly, without the least delay, I have set myself to reply to it. I am exceedingly obliged to you for your friendly expostulation, because I know it is the effusion of a pious and benevolent heart that wishes me well. With respect to the conversation at Birmingham, to which you allude, I shall conceal nothing."

He then, at the same time that he denies the precise language that was imputed to him, states what he did really say, and aims to justify the sentiment which he had maintained: disclaiming, however, any approximation to Socinian doctrine.

"You seem to suspect I am far gone in Socinianism; but in this, my dear friend, give me leave to say, you are utterly mistaken. Since I first began to reflect, I do not recollect a time when I was less inclined to Socinianism than at present. I can truly say, it would remove from me all my salvation and all my desire."

Again reverting to the expression he employed, he adds:—

"Allowing it to be improper or too strong, I can only say, it does not belong to all to speak equally temperately;

that the crime of expression can only be judged from the feelings, and that I am certain I did not *utter* it with any lightness of heart, but with deep feelings of earnestness and sincerity. Your charge of imprudence I cordially admit; and now see, with more clearness than I formerly did, that the imprudent should never come into company with the malicious.

"I had more to say; but have no room. I sincerely thank you for your letter, and shall always be extremely grateful for your correspondence, your good wishes, and your prayers.

"Believe me, as ever, affectionately yours,

"R. HALL, junior."

These letters would not have been inserted after the lapse of fifty years, but for the salutary lesson which they supply. If christian friendship always manifested itself in such fidelity as is here evinced, and uniformly experienced so kind and ingenuous a reception, what a different aspect, in a few years, would the christian world assume!

When Mr. Hall was about twenty-three years of age, he had an opportunity of hearing Mr. Robinson, his predecessor at Cambridge, preach; and was so fascinated with his manner as to resolve to *imitate* it. But, after a few trials, he relinquished the attempt. The circumstance being afterwards alluded to, he observed, "Why, "Sir, I was too proud to *remain* an imitator. After my "second trial at ————, as I was walking home, I "heard one of the congregation say to another, 'Really, "Mr. Hall *did remind* us of Mr. Robinson!' That, Sir, "was a knock-down blow to my vanity; and I at once "resolved that if ever I *did* acquire reputation, it should "be my own reputation, belong to my own character, "and not be that of a *likeness*. Besides, Sir,* if I had "not been a foolish young man, I should have seen how "ridiculous it was to imitate such a preacher as Mr. "Robinson. He had a musical voice, and was master "of all its intonations; he had wonderful self-possession, "and could say *what* he pleased, *when* he pleased, and "*how* he pleased; while my voice and manner were

* Mr. Hall very frequently repeated the word, *Sir*, in his conversation; especially if he became animated.

"naturally bad; and far from having self-command, I "never entered the pulpit, without omitting to say some-"thing that I wished to say, and saying something that "I wished unsaid: and, beside all this, I ought to have "known that for me *to speak slow was ruin*." 'Why "so?' "I wonder that you, a student of philosophy, "should ask such a question. You know, Sir, that "force, or momentum, is conjointly as the body and "velocity; therefore, as my voice is feeble, what is "wanted in body must be made up in velocity, or there "will not be, cannot be, any impression."

This remark, though thrown off hastily, in unreserved conversation, presents the theory of *one* important cause of the success of his rapid eloquence.

Shortly after this, Mr. Hall was, for the first time, in Mr. Robinson's society; I believe in London. Mr. Robinson was affluent in flatteries for those who worshipped him, while Mr. Hall neither courted flattery, nor scattered its incense upon others. In speaking of the Socinian controversy, the elder indulged in sarcasm upon "juvenile defenders of the faith," and made various efforts to "set the young man down," which tempted Mr. Hall to reply that "if *he* ever rode into the field of public "controversy, he should not borrow Dr. Abbadie's *boots*." This enigmatical retort* Mr. Robinson understood, and probably *felt* more than Mr. Hall had anticipated; for he had about that time quitted the field, put off "the boots," and passed to the verge of Socinianism. In the course of some discussions that followed, Mr. Hall, as most of those who were present thought, completely exposed the dangerous sophistry by which Mr. Robinson endeavoured to explain away some very momentous truths. Mr. Robinson, perceiving that the stream of opinion fell in with the arguments of his young opponent, and vexed at being thus foiled, lost his usual placidity and courtesy, and suddenly changed the topic of conver-

* The allusion was to the defence of the divinity of our Lord, published in French, by Dr. Abbadie, in his "Vindication of the Truth of the Christian Religion;" a work from which Mr. Robinson was thought to have borrowed many of his arguments in his "Plea for the Divinity," &c., without acknowledgement.

sation, saying, "the company may be much better em-"ployed than by listening to a raw school-boy, whose "head is crammed with Scotch metaphysics." Nothing but a consciousness that the "raw school-boy" had defeated him, would have thus thrown him off his guard.

In 1788, Mr. Hall, weary of the solitude to which he was often subjected, as a mere lodger, and anticipating marriage in the course of a few months (an anticipation, however, which was not realized), hired a house; his sister Jane, afterwards Mrs. James, kindly consenting to superintend his domestic concerns. From a letter which he then wrote to his father, I extract a few passages.

Feb. 10th, 1788.

"We have a great deal of talk here about the slave-trade; as I understand from your letter you have had too. A petition has been sent from hence to Parliament for the abolishing it; and a committee is formed to co-operate with that in London, in any measure that may be taken to promote their purpose. At Bristol much opposition is made by the merchants and their dependents, who are many, perhaps most of them, engaged in it. Our petition was signed by eight hundred, or upwards; which, considering that *no application has been made to any*, we think a great number. Many things have been written in the papers on both sides: some pieces I have written myself, under the signature *Britannicus*,* which I purpose to get printed in a few pamphlets, and shall send one of them to you. The injustice and inhumanity of the trade are glaring, and upon this ground I mainly proceed: upon the *policy* of abolishing it I treat lightly, because I am dubious about it; nor can it be of great consequence to the question in hand: for, if it be proved cruel and unjust, it is impious to defend it....

"I am afraid the abolition will not take place speedily, if at all. The trading and mercantile interest will make great outcry; the scheme will be thought chimerical, and, after producing a few warm speeches, will, I fear, die away."

* * * * * *

"My own temper, I know, needs some correction, and it will be my daily endeavour to mend it: it wants *gentleness*.

* These I have not been able to procure. It would be curious to compare them with his more mature sentiments on the subject, so admirably exhibited in some of his later Essays.

Mr. M—— has done me much good by convincing me, from his own example, to what perfection a temper naturally keen and lofty may be carried."

* * * * * *

"So far, I am happy that my duty and my gratification lie in the same direction: so that every step I take towards improvement, may be a step towards real pleasure. One inconvenience, indeed, I labour under with respect to my temper, by being connected with my sister, and that is, *she never tries it*."

A serious trial of another kind, however, awaited Mr. Hall—a painful misunderstanding between him and his friend and colleague, Dr. Evans. It continued not only to disturb the minds of both, but, as might be expected, to create partisans among their respective friends, and indeed to endanger the peace of the church at Broadmead, for more than two years. I have read various written papers, and some pamphlets, which relate to this painful affair; and cannot but conclude that, like many others, it originated in such trifling misconceptions as, in more felicitous circumstances, neither party would have suffered to disturb his thoughts for an hour. A few hasty expressions, retorted by others both hasty and strong, tempted the Doctor and his friends to accuse Mr. Hall of ingratitude, and a want of deference to his superior in age and station; he, in his turn, repelled the accusation, in language too natural to a young man glowing with a lofty spirit of independence; and thus, new charges and fresh recriminations arose. The interposition of friends availed but little; for their unhallowed passions became ignited too. After many months spent in this unseemly strife, a meeting between the parties opposed was held, in the presence of two friends of each, at the Mansion House, Mr. Harris, the Mayor of Bristol, at that time the senior deacon of the church at Broadmead, being one of the persons chosen by Dr. Evans. No beneficial effects resulted from this meeting; the individuals, who hoped by their interposition to ensure the restoration of amity, having long before ceased to be impartial judges in the affair. The friends on both sides,

who were convened on this occasion, published their respective statements; from which it appears that those who had taken one part thought Mr. Hall justifiable, and censured Dr. Evans; while those on the other approved of the Doctor's conduct, and condemned that of Mr. Hall.

It will not, then, be expected, that I should draw from the obscurity which time has cast over them, more particulars relating to this unhappy collision. Nor, indeed, should I have adverted to it, had it not operated strongly in preparing Mr. Hall for his removal from Bristol. Whatever regret it might occasion him, on subsequent meditation, it excited no self-reproach, nor left any malevolent feeling. On the decease of Dr. Evans, which took place in 1791, his former colleague prepared an inscription for his monument; and he wrote the following letter to his brother-in-law, Mr. Isaac James, in reply to that which announced the Doctor's death.

"Dear Brother, "*Cambridge, Aug.* 12, 1791.

"The contents of your letter received this day have affected me more than almost any thing of the kind I ever met with in my life. It is in all points of view a most solemn event: but, from obvious circumstances, to *me* it cannot fail of being peculiarly so. It is truly affecting to recollect the friendship that so long subsisted betwixt us, and that it should end so unhappily in a breach that admits of no repair, no remedy!! Yet, though I feel most pungently upon this occasion, I am happy to be able to join with you in declaring that my conscience is not loaded with guilt. Abating too much of an unhappy violence, I have the *mens conscia recti*. Were the circumstances to occur again, a breach would, as before, be inevitable. But though, in justice to myself, I say thus much, there is no one more disposed to lament the deceased than myself, or who has a truer sensibility of the real virtues of his character. I have written to Mr. Higgs, and therefore I need say the less to you upon these melancholy topics. The chief purpose, indeed, of my troubling *you* at present, is to request you will be so kind as to give me the earliest and most particular account of every thing that passes at his funeral; the persons present, the sermon, the impression of the event, deep no doubt and awful, the whole state of things at Bristol, their future prospects and intentions, every thing relating to these matters that you know. The situation of the family and the church, though I doubt not I am the object of their joint abhorrence, I most sincerely compassionate. May God guide and comfort them! I think you and all my friends ought now to bury all that is past, and renew a connexion with the church, if their temper will permit you. My friends will *most oblige me* by carrying it respectfully to the Doctor's family and memory. 'Anger may glance into the bosom of a wise man, but it rests only in the bosom of fools;' and our best improvement of the death of this useful servant of God, will be to imitate his excellencies and forget his errors. Pray write as soon as possible. I shall be extremely impatient till I hear. I am, dear Brother,

"Your affectionate Brother,

"*To Mr. Isaac James.*" "R. Hall."

Before this time it was generally apprehended that Mr. Hall's sentiments had, on some momentous points, deviated considerably from the accredited standards of even moderate orthodoxy; and he had given much pain to some of his Baptist friends on account of his views with regard to re-baptizing. Some correspondence took place between him and the Broadmead Church on these subjects: and, as well that the sentiments he then really held may be known, as that the extent of his declension into positive error may be judged of from his own language, I shall here insert the frank exposition of his opinions which he addressed to the church when he was on the eve of dissolving his connexion with it.

"*Thursday, Dec. 9th,* 1790.

"My dear Brethren,

"Every token of your respect and attachment sensibly affects me; and as you have requested me to explain myself on those sentiments to which I alluded as reasons of separation, I think it a duty I owe to myself and to you, to give you all the satisfaction in my power.

"1st. In the first place, I am a firm believer in the proper divinity of Jesus Christ; in the merits of Christ as the sole ground of acceptance in the sight of God, without admitting works to have any share in the great business of Justification; and in the necessity of Divine influence to regenerate and sanctify the mind of every man, in order to his becoming a real Christian. Thus far in the affirmative.

"2ndly. In the second place, I am not a Calvinist, in the strict and proper sense of that term. I do not maintain the federal headship of Adam, as it is called, or the imputation of his sin to his posterity; and this doctrine I have always considered, and do still consider, as the foundation of that system. I believe we have received from our first parents, together with various outward ills, a corrupt and irregular bias of mind; but, at the same time, it is my firm opinion that we are liable to condemnation *only* for our own actions, and that *guilt* is a personal and individual thing. I believe in the doctrine of the Divine Decrees, and of course in the predestination of all events, of which the number of the finally saved is one. But this appears to me a different thing from the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation, as it has ever been explained by Calvinists, which does not meet my approbation. Without going into a large field of metaphysical discussion, this is all I think it requisite to say respecting my orthodoxy; but there are two other points which have occasioned a good deal of conversation, and from some quarters a good deal of censure; upon which I shall therefore beg leave to explain myself in a few words.

"3rdly. I am, and have been for a long time, a materialist, though I have never drawn your attention to this subject in my preaching; because I have always considered it myself, and wished you to consider it, as *a mere metaphysical speculation*. My opinion, however, upon this head is, that the nature of man is simple and uniform; that the thinking powers and faculties are the result of a certain organization of matter; and that after death he ceases to be conscious *until the resurrection*.

* * * * * *

"Much has been said upon my opinions respecting Baptism, and I am happy to have this opportunity of explaining my sentiments on that subject in particular, as it affects not only the propriety of my former relation to this church, but of any future connexion I may form with any other Christian society. On this point much mistake, much misrepresentation, I hope not voluntary, has taken place; and on this account I trust you will excuse my dwelling upon it a little more particularly than its importance in other respects might seem to justify. It has been held out to the world by some, that I am *not a Baptist*. I am, both in respect to the subject and to the mode of this institution, a Baptist. To apply this ordinance to infants appears to me a perversion of the intention of the sacred institution; and the primitive,

the regular, and proper mode of administration, I take to be *immersion*. Still it appears to me that sprinkling, though an innovation, does not deprive Baptism of its essential validity, so as to put the person that has been sprinkled *in adult age* upon a footing with the unbaptized. The whole of my sentiments amounts to this:—I would not myself baptize in any other manner than by immersion, because I look upon immersion as the ancient mode, that it best represents the meaning of the original term employed, and the substantial import of this institution; and because I should think it right to guard against the spirit of innovation, which in positive rites is always dangerous and progressive: but I should not think myself authorized to re-baptize any one who has been sprinkled in adult age. I shall only remark, in addition to what I have already said upon this point, that if it be a sufficient objection to my union with a Baptist congregation, then, as all Christendom is composed of Baptists or Pædobaptists, it amounts to my exclusion, as a minister, from every Christian society throughout the whole earth: an interdict equally absurd and inhuman, founded upon a conduct merely negative in chimerical situations seldom or never likely to occur.

"I have thus, in compliance with your wishes, and with all the perspicuity in my power, in a few words explained to you my religious opinions, with a more particular view to the subjects on which I may be supposed most to err: and this avowal I have made, partly as a testimony of the respect I bear you, and partly to vindicate my character from any suspicion of ambiguity or reserve; but not at all with the remotest wish to win popularity, or to court your suffrages; for at present it is as little in my power to accept any invitation to continue, as it may be in your inclination to give it, as I hold myself engaged in honour as a probationer for six months to a respectable society at Cambridge. May peace and prosperity attend you!

"I am, your Friend and Brother,

"With the greatest respect,

"R. Hall."

The vexations and perplexities in which Mr. Hall had been for some time involved, doubtless facilitated his removal to another sphere of action. And he who duly meditates upon the way in which the great Head of the Church renders the movements of his providence subservient to his merciful purposes in Redemption, will, I

am persuaded, trace the superintending hand on this occasion.

Mr. Robinson, the pastor of the church at Cambridge, with which Mr. Hall was now about to be connected, was a man of extensive powers, of some genius, and of considerable industry and research. Fascinating as a preacher, delightful as a companion, perseveringly skilful in the insinuation of his sentiments, his influence could not but be great. From the profession of orthodox opinions, he had passed by a rather rapid transition, not to Socinianism, but far beyond, to the very borders of infidelity; such, at least, was the substance of his declaration to Dr. Priestley, whom he *thanked* for preserving him from that awful gulf. Vain speculation was substituted for knowledge, faith, and experience; confession, and prayer, but seldom made a part of the public worship which he conducted, his effusions before sermon consisting almost altogether of ascriptions of praise; and the congregation became so transformed and deteriorated, in consequence, that, among the more intelligent classes, with only two or three exceptions, "he was esteemed the best Christian who was most skilled in disputation," not he who evinced most of "the spirit of Christ." The majority of the poorer members, however, escaped the contagion, and were ready to co-operate with the late Mr. Foster, who was then the senior deacon, and another of the deacons, who equally deplored the evils which had fallen upon them. Cordially attached to those doctrines which they regarded as fundamental, and therefore as constituting the basis of church union, they were preparing to call upon the whole body to consider the expediency of requesting Mr. Robinson to resign, when his sudden death at Birmingham, just after he had been preaching in Dr. Priestley's pulpit, rendered such a measure unnecessary. On the news of this event reaching Cambridge, Mr. Foster, who was then on his death-bed, made it his last request to some of the most influential men in the church, that they would never consent to the appointment of a Socinian as Mr. Robinson's successor.

From this account of the state of the church at Mr. Robinson's decease, it will appear how difficult it was to select a successor who would be approved by all; how difficult, also, for that successor to walk steadily in the path of duty.

Mr. Hall, who by this time had attained a high reputation as a preacher, was invited, in June or July, 1790, to preach at Cambridge for one month; after which the invitation was renewed for a longer term. In July the following year, he was invited to take the pastoral charge; the letter, announcing his acceptance of the important trust, will appear in the collection which follows this memoir.

In these transactions and their consequences *still* unfolding, the wisdom and mercy of God are strikingly manifested. There was at that time no man of eminence among the Baptists, besides Mr. Hall, who could for a moment have been thought of by the church at Cambridge as a fit successor to Mr. Robinson; nor was there any Baptist church and congregation with which *he* could become connected, with the same prospect of being useful and happy, according to the views he then entertained. Had Mr. Hall's religious principles and feelings been such in 1790 and 1791, as they became a few years afterwards, not even *his* talents would have made them palatable; and a connexion, had it been formed, would soon have been dissolved: on the other hand, had the church been decidedly and entirely socinianized, he could not conscientiously have become its pastor. The providential correlation soon began to show itself. *Their* looseness of sentiment on many points, which even then he thought momentous, led him to enforce them frequently with the utmost energy; while *his* known freedom of opinion on other points, which they also had been led to canvass freely, preserved him from the odium of orthodoxy. Thinking themselves liberal and unshackled, they could not but congratulate one another that their new pastor, a man of splendid talents, was *almost* as liberal and unshackled as they were. Then again, their want of devotional seriousness, by the force of contrast, heightened his estimate of the value of true piety; and this produced

an augmented earnestness and fidelity, which they first learnt to tolerate, and afterwards to admire. Thus, by the operation of an incessant action and re-action, continued for years, each party exerted a salutary influence on the other; and at length both church and pastor became so distinguished for piety, harmony, and affection, that they, who had known and lamented their former state, were compelled to exclaim, "This hath God wrought." *

The death of Mr. Hall's father, which occurred in March, 1791, had indeed tended greatly to carry his mind back to the state of serious thought with which he entered upon the pastoral office. Meditating, with the deepest veneration, upon the unusual excellencies of a parent now for ever lost to him, he was led to investigate, with renewed earnestness, the truth as well as value of those high and sacred principles, from which his eminent piety and admirable consistency so evidently flowed. He called to mind, too, several occasions on which his father, partly by the force of reason, partly by that of tender expostulation, had exhorted him to abandon the vague and dangerous speculations to which he was prone. Some important changes in Mr. Hall's sentiments resulted from an inquiry conducted under such solemn impressions; and among these may be mentioned his renunciation of *materialism*, which he often declared he "buried in his father's grave."

Attentive to the voice of heavenly admonition, thus addressing him from various quarters, he entered upon his new duties with earnest desires that he might be able

* Though such was the happy issue, I am inclined to think that Mr. Hall found himself in very perilous circumstances, which he had not forgotten when he thus expressed himself in his Memoirs of Mr. Toller:—The reciprocal influence of a minister and a congregation on each other is so incessant and so powerful, that I would earnestly dissuade an inexperienced youth from connecting himself with a people whose doctrine is erroneous, or whose piety is doubtful, lest he should be tempted to consult his ease by choosing to yield to a current he would find it difficult to resist. To root up error, and reclaim a people from inveterate habits of vice and irreligion, is unquestionably a splendid achievement; but it requires a hardihood of character and decision of principle not often found in young persons."

"to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Feeling that to him was consigned the charge of transforming, with God's assistance, a cold and sterile soil into a fruitful field, he determined not to satisfy himself with half measures, but proceeded to expose error, and defend what he regarded as essential truth. The first sermon, therefore, which he delivered at Cambridge, after he had assumed the office of pastor, was on the doctrine of the atonement, and its practical tendencies. Immediately after the conclusion of the service, one of the congregation, who had followed poor Mr. Robinson through all his changes of sentiment, went into the vestry, and said, 'Mr. Hall, this preaching won't do for us: it will only suit a congregation of old women.' "Do you mean my sermon, Sir, or the doctrine?" 'Your *doctrine*.' "Why is it that the *doctrine* is fit only for old women?" 'Because it may suit the musings of people tottering upon the brink of the grave, and who are eagerly seeking comfort.' "Thank you, Sir, for your concession. The doctrine will not *suit* people of *any* age, unless it be true; and if it *be true*, it is not fitted for old women alone, but is equally important at every age."

This individual, and three or four other men of influence, with about twenty from the poorer classes, shortly afterwards withdrew from the congregation, and met together on the Sunday evenings at a private house. The then Rev. William Frend, fellow and tutor of Jesus College, an avowed Socinian, became their religious instructor. This separate assembly, however, did not continue many months; for the person, at whose house they met, was, ere long, taken up and tried for sedition, and convicted; * and the proceedings against Mr. Frend, on account of his pamphlet entitled "Peace and Union," which for so long a time kept the University of Cambridge in a state of great agitation, and which ended in

* This individual after went to America, and became a minister. He was afterwards appointed Chaplain to a ship in the United States' Navy, and subsequently had the honour of preaching twice before the Congress.

his expulsion from it, drew away his attention from the little band of seceders.

Mr. Hall's ministerial labours, at this interesting period of his life, were blessed with the happiest results, when the benefit seemed likely to be for a while suspended, by the intrusion of *violent* political discussion. The impression made throughout Europe by the French revolution of 1789, was such, that not merely here and there an individual indulged in political speculation, but almost every man threw himself into the vortex of political controversy. The clergy of every order and station, the laity of every rank and class, yielded alike to the impulsion; and he who did not declare his decided and cordial adhesion to one or other of the contending parties, might expect the censure of both, for his want of spirit or of principle. Cambridge, hitherto characterized as the whig university, was, at this epoch, split into the most violent party divisions, and the public was deluged with sermons from the pulpit, and pamphlets from the press, in which the respective advocates of "things as they are," and of "things as they should be," defended their opposite views with the utmost zeal, and too often with the most unbecoming rancour.

At such a season, Mr. Hall, then under thirty years of age, was not likely to maintain an entire silence. When a man's quiescence was sufficient to render his principles equivocal, *he* was certainly not one who would make a secret of his opinions. He thought that political ethics had almost ceased to be referable to any principle of pure ethics. He hesitated not to avow that the grand object of all good government must be to promote the happiness of the governed, to assist every individual in its attainment and security. He regarded a government chiefly anxious about the emoluments of office, or aiming to consolidate its own power at home and to aid the efforts of despots abroad, while it neglected the comfort and welfare of individuals in middle or lower life, whose burdens it augmented by a mistaken course, as a government that should be *constitutionally* opposed by every lawful means.

He gave to such subjects, also, more than political considerations. He looked upon those European governments which were founded on oppression, and trampled on the natural rights of man, as operating most fatally in the extinction of light and virtue. He regarded the conditions of those who tyrannize, and of those who are the objects of tyranny, as each productive of a numerous and distinct class of vices; and thought that the consequent darkness, ignorance, and criminality of the general mass under despotic governments, in great measure, if not entirely, incapacitated them for the pure and elevated enjoyments of heaven. It was hence a permanent conviction of his mind, "that he who is instrumental "in perpetuating a corrupt and wicked government, is "also instrumental in unfitting his fellow-men for the "felicity of the celestial mansions." Could it then be matter of surprise that, believing and feeling all this, he should exult when "the empire of darkness and of despotism had been smitten with a stroke which sounded through the universe;*" or, when other ministers of the gospel were signalizing themselves by opposing this view of things, that he should, for a short interval, be drawn aside from pursuits more congenial with his prevailing tastes, and in many important respects, I think, more compatible with his holy calling, and at once endeavour to prove that "christianity is consistent with a love of freedom," and that true christianity will prevail most where genuine freedom is most diffused and best understood?

Cordial, however, as was Mr. Hall's attachment to a cause in which he conceived man's best interests to be closely interwoven, and strong as was his hatred of despotic measures, or what he regarded as such, either at home or abroad, I do not think that even their joint operation would have overcome his repugnance to writing, had it not been for skilful *abettors*, who first worked his feelings, and then extorted from him the promise of preparing a work for the public. Such, if I have not

* See the splendid passage towards the end of his "Christianity consistent with a love of freedom."

been misinformed, was the origin of his first political pamphlet; and such, I know, from his own declaration, often repeated, was the origin of the eloquent and powerful "Apology for the Freedom of the Press." The evening after the event occurred, to which he alludes in the "Apology," with respect to Mr. Musgrave, he attended a periodical meeting of a book-society, constituted principally of members of his own congregation, and of Mr. Simeon's, and usually denominated *Alderman Ind's Club*, that distinguished ornament of Mr. Simeon's congregation being the treasurer. Every person present expressed himself in terms of the strongest indignation at the insult offered to Mr. Musgrave; every one thought it highly desirable that some man of talent at *Cambridge* should advocate the principles maintained by the friends of liberty, especially of those who avowed evangelical sentiments, and the necessity for their united activity, in the present state of the country and of Europe. Mr. Hall spoke as decidedly as any of them with regard to the urgent necessities of the case; when they all, having brought him precisely into the position at which they were aiming, exclaimed, that it was he to whom alone they could look in this exigency. "Alderman Ind, you "know, Sir (said he), was an excellent man; pure as a "seraph, and gentle as a lamb. I thought that if *he* felt "roused, if *he* could join with the rest in urging me, I "might bring all hesitation to a truce; and so, in an evil "hour, I yielded to their entreaties. I went home to my "lodgings, and began to write immediately; sat up all "night; and, wonderful for me, kept up the intellectual "ferment for almost a month; and then the thing was "done. I revised it a little as it went through the press; "but I have ever since regretted that I wrote so hastily "and superficially upon some subjects brought forward, "which required touching with a master-hand, and ex-"ploring to their very foundations. So far as I under-"stand the purely political principles which are advanced "in that pamphlet, they are, I believe, correct: at all "events they are mine still. But, I repeat it, I yielded "in an evil hour; especially if I had any wish to obtain

"permanent reputation as a political writer. Perhaps, "however, the pamphlet had its use in those perilous "times." Such was Mr. Hall's account of this publication. How far it indicates the tone of deterioration, in which, almost through life, he characterized his own productions, they who are best acquainted with the "Apology" will be most competent to decide; unless, indeed, their prepossessions and prejudices should disqualify them for deciding aright.

But, whatever might be Mr. Hall's opinion of this work, it does not seem to have been regarded by the public as of little value. Three editions were called for, I believe, within less than six months; and then, the author not sanctioning a republication, various editions were printed and circulated surreptitiously. Its more splendid and impressive passages were repeatedly quoted in the periodicals of the day, and many of its arguments were cited as perfectly conclusive. It was also widely circulated in America; and is there still regarded as having been powerfully influential in diffusing those liberal political principles which, of late, have acquired so marked an extension and ascendency in Britain.

Mr. Hall, however, even at the time when this pamphlet was written, though very decided in his sentiments both as a reformer and a dissenter upon those political grounds of nonconformity, which he in later years saw reason in some measure to quit, could not, in any correct sense of the term, be denominated a partisan: and he soon experienced such inconveniences from his political celebrity, as induced him to recede, not from his principles, or from the avowal of them in private, but from the farther advocacy of them in public. It forced upon him the society of men whose conduct and character he could not approve; it tended to draw him, much more than he could conscientiously justify, from retirement and study; and thus, ere long, he became of opinion, to adopt his own words, "that the christian ministry is in danger of "losing something of its energy and sanctity, by embark-"ing on the stormy element of political debate." His elegant eulogium on Dr. Priestley in his first pamphlet,

and the warm terms of admiration in which he used to speak of him in private, tempted many to fancy and to say, that he, also, was a Socinian at heart; and although his preaching became more and more distinguished by the introduction and energetic application of evangelical truth, he still found himself often so equivocally placed, as to render his denial of Socinianism quite imperative. On one of these occasions, Mr. Hall having in his usual terms panegyrized Dr. Priestley, a gentleman who held the Doctor's theological opinions, tapping Mr. Hall upon the shoulder with an indelicate freedom from which he recoiled, said, 'Ah! Sir, we shall have *you* among us soon, I see.' Mr. Hall, startled and offended by the rude tone of exultation in which this was uttered, hastily replied, "*Me* amongst *you*, Sir! *me* amongst *you*! Why, "if that were ever the case, I should deserve to be tied "to the tail of the great red dragon, and whipped round "the nethermost regions to all eternity!"

Notwithstanding the reasons Mr. Hall thus had for some degree of reserve, yet in this, as in every other period of his life, he displayed a remarkable relish for social intercourse. He did not court the society of literary men; indeed he rather shrunk from it, because he felt the risk of having his thoughts too much engrossed by mere matters of language or of science: he had acquired enough of both to value them greatly; yet he desired to regard them principally as subservient to the higher purposes of his profession. Besides this, the philosophy of mind, in which he took extreme interest, was then but little cultivated at Cambridge. Happily, however, the leading individuals in his congregation were very intelligent and well-informed, able to appreciate his talents justly, and skilful in bringing his conversational powers into full action. With one or other of these he usually spent his evenings, selecting most frequently those who possessed the enjoyments of domestic life, and often stealing in earlier than he was expected, that he might take his share, for an hour, in the gambols and gaiety of the children.

He was, but only for a short time, an imitator of Dr. Johnson. Some years afterwards, when reminded of this, he replied—"Yes, Sir: I aped Johnson, and I "preached Johnson; and I am afraid with little more of "evangelical sentiment than is to be found in his Essays: "but it was youthful folly, and it was very great folly. "I might as well have attempted to dance a hornpipe "in the cumbrous costume of Gog and Magog. My "puny thoughts could not sustain the load of the words "in which I tried to clothe them."

There needed not, in truth, the principle of imitation, to produce great similarity in some important respects between these two extraordinary men. They manifested the physical differences between a melancholic and a cheerful temperament; in consequence of which, the one was slow and measured in utterance, the other rapid and urgent. But, in conversation, both evinced a ready comprehension of the whole subject, a quick and decisive accuracy in answering, and a perfect self-dependence. They both disliked a protracted debate, and would sometimes terminate a discussion, when it was growing tiresome, by a strong and pointed observation which it was difficult to encounter. Both were alike in exhibiting a rather more than ordinary degree of faith in things of a preternatural or mysterious description. In both, too, there were the similarities of acute intellect united with splendid imagination; and of a natural majesty of mental and moral genius which commanded veneration. But, in the correction of his faults, and the improvement of his virtues, Mr. Hall possessed, in his superior piety, an immense advantage over Dr. Johnson.

In argument he was impetuous. and sometimes overbearing; but if he lost his temper he was deeply humbled, and would often acknowledge himself to blame. On one of these occasions, when a discussion had become warm, and he had evinced unusual agitation, he suddenly closed the debate, quitted his seat, and, retiring to a remote part of the room, was overheard by a lady who was just entering, to ejaculate with deep feeling, "Lamb of "God! Lamb of God! calm my perturbed spirit."

Mr. Hall's personal habits, not only at the time of

which I am now speaking, but in a certain degree through life, though not precisely those of an absent man, were those of one whose mental occupations kept his thoughts at a distance from various matters of ordinary observance, and made him regardless of a thousand things which most persons never forget. Thus, on his return from an evening visit, if not watched, he would take a wrong hat or great coat;—if not sought after by some of the congregation, he would mistake the proper evening of a week-day service, having in such cases been so absorbed in study as to lose a day in his reckoning; for the same reason, he often mistook the day or the hour of an appointment;—when on any of his journeys to London he engaged to take up the letters of his friends, it was not unusual, after his return, to find them all in his portmanteau, or in his great coat pocket. These, or similar instances of forgetfulness, occurred daily; but, exciting the attention of his affectionate and watchful friends, they seldom exposed him to serious inconvenience.

None of these peculiarities sprung from an affectation of singularity; they simply marked an inattention to things of minor importance. Nor was there united with them a regardlessness of the proprieties of society, a disdain of such civilities and attentions as were usual in the classes with whom he most associated. He had never aimed to acquire a facility in the manners and habits of genteel life; but he had a native ease and grace, which was obviously distinguishable from any acquired habit. It was a grace that could neither be bought nor borrowed; on all proper occasions, heightened by the dignity which naturally comported with his character and office; and uniformly blended with that genuine simplicity which often accompanies intellectual greatness, and is always, if I mistake not, an attribute of moral greatness.

Several particulars in the preceding account of Mr. Hall's first years at Cambridge will be illustrated by the following brief sketch, which I have received from a gentleman who had the most favourable opportunities, as well as the requisite taste and discrimination, for correctly estimating his character.

"I had but a slight acquaintance with Robert Hall from 1790 to 1793: from thence to the end of 1796, I knew him intimately. At that period his creed was imperfect, wanting the personality of the Holy Spirit, and wavering between the terrors of Calvin and the plausibilities of Baxter.* His infirmities, which were increasing, he concealed with dexterity, opposed with vigour, and sustained with uncommon patience. In his ministerial situation he was far from easy; and he was vehemently severe upon Robinson for leaving his church a wilderness, and bequeathing his successor a bed of thorns.

"His religious conversation in company was not frequent, and for the most part doctrinal; but, in private, his experimental communications were, in beauty, elevation, and compass, beyond all I ever heard. The memory of a man of seventy-three will not afford particulars; and the general impression can neither be obliterated nor expressed.

"In his manners he was a close imitator of Dr. Johnson; fond of tea-table talk, and of the society of cultivated females, who had the taste to lend him an ear, and the ability requisite to make attention a favour. He has confessed to me the taking thirty cups of tea in an afternoon, and told me his method was to visit four families and drink seven or eight cups at each.

"He knew, as well as any man, what bad men were, and what good men should be; yet was often wrong in his judgment of individuals. From this deficiency in the knowledge of mankind, he sometimes trusted his false, and abused his true, friends: when he perceived his error he changed his conduct, but, I suspect, very seldom confessed his mistake.

"He did not, then, read much; but was probably more hindered by pain than by indolence. A page, indeed, was to him more serviceable than a volume to many. Hints from reading or discourse, passing through his great mind, expanded into treatises and systems, until the adopted was lost in the begotten; so much so, that the whole appeared original. I am persuaded, however, that when I knew him he had not, by many degrees, attained his meridian. I should regret my incapacity to do him justice, and give you assistance, were I not persuaded that only the bud was exhibited to me, while the bloom and the fruit were reserved for those more deserving to be happy."

I had the privilege of becoming first known to Mr.

*This phraseology will mark the bias of my truly respected correspondent.

Hall in January, 1797. During that year we dined daily at the same table: the next year we met almost every morning to read together: and for some years afterwards scarcely a week passed in which I was not three or four times in his society. When I first became acquainted with him I was young, and ignorant of nearly every thing but the most rudimental knowledge of language and science; of which I possessed just enough to employ as instruments of inquiry. I was eager to acquire information; but ran some risk of turning my mind to that which was useless, or merely showy, instead of directing its best energy to that which was truly valuable. In such circumstances to be allowed the friendship and enjoy the advice and assistance of such a man, was among my richest blessings. There was scarcely a thought worth preserving, scarcely a principle of action worth reducing to practice, scarcely a source of true enjoyment, but I derived from him, or I was led to receive or to appreciate more correctly through his agency. If, then, for some pages, my name should occur more often in immediate association with that of my beloved and revered friend, than may seem consistent with ordinary rules, may I be freed from the charge of egotism? especially, if I assure the reader, that, while nothing affords me more pleasure, nothing awakens more gratitude to the Father of Mercies, than the retrospect of the intellectual and higher than intellectual delights which were then mine, few things more humble me than the conviction that, though I enjoyed them so long, I suffered them to pass away without commensurate improvement.

Mr. Hall kindly admitted me to the privacy of his study, in addition to the advantage of frequent intercourse with him in the society of his friends. Desirous to assist others in forming their estimate of this extraordinary individual, I shall not merely speak of his character, habits, and pursuits, but occasionally introduce some of his conversational remarks; confining myself, however, to such as from their brevity always occur to my thoughts in the *ipsissima verba* originally employed. If I do not succeed in depicting the man, which, indeed

I feel conscious is far beyond my powers, I may at least attempt to describe him as he then appeared to me.

When I first saw Mr. Hall, I was struck with his well-proportioned athletic figure, the unassuming dignity of his deportment, the winning frankness which marked all that he uttered, and the peculiarities of the most speaking countenance I ever contemplated, animated by eyes radiating with the brilliancy imparted to them by benevolence, wit, and intellectual energy. When he spoke, except in the most ordinary chit-chat, to which, however, he seldom descended, he seemed not merely to communicate his words, but himself: and I then first learnt the difference between one who feels while he is speaking, and whose communicative features tell you that he does, and one who, after he has spoken long and with apparent earnestness, still does not feel. I then learnt also, that, though talents may convey their results to others, and activity may carry on others in its stream; yet there is something distinct in the structure of a great mind which never can be so transferred to another as to become its native characteristic. Mr. Hall had a buoyancy and playfulness when among his select friends, which were remarkably captivating. Among strangers there was a reserve for a short time, but it was soon shaken off, especially if he found that they were pious or intelligent. The presence of a man who gave himself airs of condescension usually induced him to remain silent or to retire. He could enjoy the society of men of moderate information; and it was interesting to observe how, by a few apt questions, he would ascertain in what direction their pursuits lay, and then so draw them out as to give them the pleasure of feeling that they were contributing to *his* stock of that kind of knowledge which they could not but think useful. He was eminently alive to the emotions of pity, an affection always calculated to inspire attachment, but which in a man of abstract habits is, I fear, very unusual. He was generous by nature, as well as upon principle, and in seasons of affliction would remarkably identify himself with those who most needed sympathy. He rather avoided, than

sought, expressions of thankfulness; and sometimes when he became oppressed by them, would hastily say, "Thank you, thank you: you have said more than "enough; remember, God has sent into the world a "more powerful, and more noble sentiment, than even "gratitude."

For some years, he made it a rule to pay a pastoral visit to every member of his church, once each quarter. He did the same, also, with regard to such of his ordinary hearers as he thought willing to receive him as a minister of religion. These were not calls, but *visits*, and usually paid on evenings, that he might meet the whole assembled family. Among the lower classes, to make them quite at their ease, he would sit down with them at supper; and, that this might involve them in no extra expense, he took care they should all know that he preferred a bason of milk.*

He persuaded the poorer members of his church to form little meetings for reading, religious conversation, and prayer, going "from house to house." These were held once a fortnight, I think, in the summer time; once a week during the winter. He made it a point of official duty to attend them frequently; and regarded them, with the weekly meetings in the vestry, as the best thermometer for ascertaining the religious state of his people.

Proceeding thus, it was not surprising that he conciliated the affections of his friends, and secured the veneration of the pious; that he extended around him a growing conviction of his excellency, and carried on many in the stream of his mental and moral power.

In him all was at the utmost remove from gloom or moroseness. Even the raillery in which he indulged, showed his good nature, and was exceedingly playful;

* The necessitous widows of his flock were not forgotten in these periodical visits. To them, he said, he repaired for religious instruction, and was seldom disappointed. On such occasions he selected his ever favourite repast of *tea*. It was his practice to carry tea and sugar with him, taking especial care that there should be more than could possibly be needed, and asking permission to leave the remainder behind him.

and, notwithstanding the avowed and lamented impetuosity in argument to which he was prone, nothing, so far as I ever saw, but conceit, engrafted upon stupidity, provoked his impatience, and called forth a severity which he scarcely knew how to restrain.* With regard to disposition, the predominant features were kindness and cheerfulness. He never deliberately gave pain to any one, except in those few extreme cases, where there appeared a moral necessity of "rebuking sharply" for the good of the offender. His kindness to children, to servants, to the indigent, nay, to animals, was uniformly manifest. And such was his prevailing cheerfulness that he seemed to move and breathe in an atmosphere of hilarity; which, indeed, his countenance always indicated, except when the pain in his back affected his spirits, and caused his imagination to dwell upon the evils of Cambridgeshire scenery.

This was, in his case, far from a hypothetical grievance. It seriously diminished his happiness at Cambridge, and, at length, was the main cause of his quitting it. In one of my early interviews with him, before I had been a month at that place, he said to me, "What do you think of Cambridge, Sir?" 'It is a very interesting place.' "Yes, the place where Bacon and Barrow, and Newton "studied, and where Jeremy Taylor was born, cannot "but be *interesting*. But that is not what I mean; what "do you say to the scenery, Sir?" 'Some of the public buildings are very striking, and the college walks very pleasing; but—' and there I hesitated: he immediately added—"but there is nothing else to be said. What "do you think of the surrounding country, Sir? Does "not it strike you as very insipid?" 'No, not precisely

* The following is an instance of his manner of checking inordinate vanity. A preacher, in whom this quality grievously preponderated, having delivered a sermon in Mr. Hall's hearing, pressed him with a disgusting union of self-complacency and indelicacy, to state what he thought of the sermon. Mr. Hall remained silent for some time, hoping his silence would be rightly interpreted; but this only caused the question to be pressed with greater earnestness. Mr. Hall at length said, "There was one very fine passage, Sir." 'I am rejoiced to hear you say so. Pray, Sir, which was it?" "Why, Sir, it was the passage from the pulpit into the vestry."

so.' "Aye, aye: I had forgotten; you come from a flat "country; yet you *must* love hills; there are no hills "here." I replied, 'Yes, there are; there are Madingley hill, and the Castle hill, and Gogmagog hill.' This amused him exceedingly,—and he said, "Why, as to "Madingley, there is something in that; it reminds you "of the Cottons, and the Cottonian Library; but that is "not because Madingley is a high hill, but because Sir "Robert Cotton was a great man; and even he was not "born *there*. Then, as to your second example, do you "know that the Castle hill is the place of the public ex- "ecutions? that is no very pleasant association, Sir. "And as to your last example, Gogmagog hill is five "miles off, and many who go there are puzzled to say "whether it is natural or artificial. 'Tis a dismally flat "country, Sir; dismally flat.* Ely is more than twelve "miles distant, but the road from Cambridge thither "scarcely deviates twelve inches from the same level; "and *that's* not very interesting. Before I came to Cam- "bridge, I had read in the prize poems, and in some "other works of fancy, of 'the banks of the Cam,' of "'the sweetly flowing stream,' and so on; but when I "arrived here, I was sadly disappointed. When I first "saw the river as I passed over King's College Bridge, I "could not help exclaiming, Why, the stream is standing "still to see people drown themselves! and that I am "sorry to say is a permanent feeling with me." I ques-

* On Mr. Hall's last visit to Cambridge, one of his friends took him out for a morning's ride, and showed him the improvements as to cultivation, by means of new inclosures, &c. "True," said he, "but still "there is that odious flatness, that insipid sameness of scenery all "around; there is no variety, no beauty." His friend, anxious that he should at least admire something, said, 'Look at these fields, with the crops of corn so smooth and so abundant; are not *they* pleasant? And do they not excite the idea of plenty?' He rejoined with his usual promptness, "Oh! yes: and so does a large meal-tub, filled to the brim. But I was not thinking of *plenty*, but of *beauty*."

At another time, when indulging the same strain of remark, he said, "Beyond the College precincts there is not a tree for a man to hang "himself upon when he is weary of the barrenness of the place." A gentleman present reminded him that there were some trees in the way to Grantchester, a village about two miles from Cambridge. Mr. Hall replied, "Yes, Sir, I recollect. Willows, I believe, Sir:—Nature hanging out signals of distress, Sir."

tioned the correctness of this impression, but he immediately rejoined, "Shocking place for the spirits, Sir; I "wish you may not find it so; it must be the very focus "of suicides. Were you ever at Bristol, Sir? there *is* "scenery, scenery worth looking upon, and worth think- "ing of: and so there is even at Aberdeen, with all its "surrounding barrenness. The trees on the banks of the "Don are as fine as those on the banks of the Cam; and "the river is alive, Sir; it falls over precipices, and foams "and dashes, so as to invigorate and inspire those who "witness it. The Don is *a river*, Sir, and the Severn is "*a river;* but not even a poet would so designate *the* "*Cam*, unless by an obvious figure he termed it the "*sleeping* river."

The semi-playful and rapid manner in which he uttered things of this kind, did not always conceal the deep feeling of incurable and growing dislike with which he was struggling.

When I first became known to Mr. Hall, he had recently determined to revise and extend his knowledge in every department, "to re-arrange the whole furniture of his mind, and the economy of his habits," and to become a thorough student. He proposed devoting six hours a day to reading; but these, unless his friends sought after him, were often extended to eight or nine. He thought himself especially defective in a tasteful and critical acquaintance with the Greek poets; and said he should "once more begin at the beginning." He set to work, therefore, upon the best treatises on the Greek metres then extant. He next read the Iliad and Odyssey twice over, critically; proceeded with equal care through nearly all the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides; and thence extended his classical reading in all directions. To the Latin and Greek poets, orators, historians, and philosophers, he devoted a part of every day for three or four years. He studied them as a scholar, but he studied them also as a moralist and a philosopher; so that, while he appreciated their peculiarities and beauties with his wonted taste, and carefully improved his style of writing and his tone of thinking by the best models

which they present, he suffered them not to deteriorate the accuracy of his judgement in comparing their value with that of the moderns. Perhaps, however, this assertion should be a little qualified; for, not only at the period of which I am now speaking, but, in great measure, through life, while he spoke of the Greek and Latin poetry in accordance with the sentiments and feelings of every competent classical scholar, he, with very few exceptions, unduly depreciated the poetry of the present times.

Much as he delighted in classical literature, he was by no means inclined, nor could he have reconciled it with his notions of duty, to circumscribe his reading within its limits. The early Christian fathers, the fathers of the Reformation, the theological writers, both puritan and episcopalian, of the seventeenth century, the most valuable authors on all similar topics down to the present time, including the most esteemed French preachers, were all perused with his characteristic avidity: * what was most valuable in them became fixed in his unusually retentive memory; and numerous marginal and other references in the most valuable of his books, prove at once the minuteness and closeness of his attention, and his desire to direct his memory to the substances of thought, and not unnecessarily to load it with mere apparatus.

Like many other men of letters, Mr. Hall, at this period, found the advantage of passing from one subject to another at short intervals, generally of about two hours: thus casting off the mental fatigue that one subject had occasioned by directing his attention to another, and

* Considering his prevailing love of simplicity, I have always thought it singular that he should, for several years, have preferred Bossuet to all the other French preachers. Many years ago I transcribed from his copy of the *Oraisons Funebres*, these lines in his hand-writing: "The first of mortal compositions; inferior only to those words unutterable which compose the songs of seraphs around the throne." And I recollect that, about the same time, on one of his congregation saying to him, 'The impressive conclusion of your Sermon this morning, Sir, reminded me very much of Bossuet,' he replied, "I am sorry for it. "There is no preacher of whom I should more reluctantly remind my "congregation than Bossuet. I should come off most miserably in the "comparison."

thereby preserving the intellect in a state of elastic energy from the beginning to the end of the time devoted daily to study.

Not long after he had entered upon this steady course of reading, he commenced the study of Hebrew, under Mr. Lyons, who then taught that language in the University. He soon became a thorough proficient in it; and, finding it greatly to increase his knowledge of the Old Testament, as well as of its relation to the New, and considerably to improve and enlarge the power of Scripture interpretation, he, from thence to the close of his life, suffered scarcely a day to pass without reading a portion of the Old Testament in the original. This practice flowed naturally from one of his principles of action, namely, to go to the fountain-head for information, rather than to derive it from the streams; and from the continued application of that principle, it was found that his habit of reading originals often impaired the accuracy of his quotation of passages from our authorised version, having, in fact, become more familiar with the Hebrew and Greek texts than with any translation. This, which was conjectured by some of his hearers at Cambridge, was amply confirmed by the subsequent observation of his intimate and much esteemed friend, Mr. Ryley, at Leicester.

It would be useless to record, even briefly, Mr. Hall's opinions of the numerous authors, ancient and modern, which he read at this period with such close attention, since they accord generally with those of all men of correct taste and sound judgement. Yet perhaps I may state, with regard to his chief uninspired favourite among the Greek writers, that to none of the ornaments of pagan antiquity did he refer in such terms of fervid eulogy as to Plato. Not Cudworth himself could appreciate him more highly. He frequently expressed his astonishment at the neglect into which he apprehended the writings of Plato were sinking; and said that an entire disregard of them would be an irrefragable proof of a shallow age. Milton, he remarked, gave the noblest proofs, in his prose writings, of a knowledge and love of

Plato; and he expressed a surprise, almost bordering upon contempt, in reference to those who classed this wonderful man with the schoolmen. It was his frequent remark, that even when Plato wrote upon the most abstract subjects, whether moral, metaphysical, or mathematical, his style was as clear as the purest stream, and that his diction was deeply imbued with the poetic spirit. On occasions when he ran no risk of the charge of pedantry, he would, by appropriate quotations, confirm these views. He delighted to expatiate upon this philosopher's notions of vice and virtue, of idleness and industry; and often adduced the platonic definition of education, as "that which qualifies men to be good citizens, and renders them fit to govern or to obey." On one occasion he pointed to a passage, in the first Republic, I think, from which it appeared that Plato perceived the advantages resulting from *the subdivision of labour*, and suggested the natural progress of such subdivision in proportion to the advance of civilization.

In speaking of this philosopher, Mr. Hall illustrated his view of the evil of studying a Greek author, with the aid of a Latin version, by a reference to *Serranus's* magnificent edition of his works, in the Latin version of which he said he had often detected errors. He also mentioned a ridiculous blunder of one of the English translators, who had, it seems, availed himself of a Latin version, in which, as was customary two or three hundred years ago, the omission of an *m* or an *n* was indicated by a bar placed over the preceding letter. Disregarding this superposed bar, the translator had read *hirudo* instead of *hirundo*, and thus, upon Plato's authority, declared the *horse-leech* instead of the *swallow* to be the harbinger of the spring!

I have dwelt rather longer upon these topics than would be at all necessary, were it not to correct the notion which some persons have entertained, that Mr. Hall was indolent, and that, though when stimulated to the effort he would exert himself as a profound thinker, yet he was not a man of research, or, in the ordinary acceptation, a good scholar.

When Mr. Hall proposed that we should devote an hour every morning to reading together, he asked me to assist him in his mathematical studies; adding, that as a matter of mutual advantage, it might be well that, on alternate mornings, I should be his mathematical tutor, and he my instructor in metaphysics. To this proposal I gladly assented; and it has long been my persuasion that the scheme flowed in great measure from his desire to call my attention to general literature, and especially to the science of mind.

At that period, though he was strong and active, he often suffered extremely from the pain to which I have before adverted, and which was his sad companion through life. On entering his room to commence our reading, I could at once tell whether or not his night had been refreshing; for, if it had, I found him at the table, the books to be studied ready, and a vacant chair set for me. If his night had been restless, and the pain still continued, I found him lying on the sofa, or more frequently, upon three chairs, on which he could obtain an easier position. At such seasons, scarcely ever did a complaint issue from his lips; but, inviting me to take the sofa, our reading commenced. They, however, who knew Mr. Hall, can conjecture, how often, if he became interested, he would raise himself from the chairs, utter a few animated expressions, and then resume the favourite reclining posture. Sometimes, when he was suffering more than usual, he proposed a walk in the fields, where, with the appropriate book, as our companion, we could pursue the subject. If *he* was the preceptor, as was commonly the case in these peripatetic lectures, he soon lost the sense of pain, and nearly as soon escaped from our author, whoever he might be, and expatiated at large upon some train of inquiry or explication, which our course of reading had suggested As his thoughts enkindled, both his steps and his words became quicker, until, ere long, it was difficult to say, whether the body or the mind were brought most upon the stretch in keeping up with him. This peculiarity I have noticed in a few other men of vigorous intellect and lively imagination.

Mr. Hall's avowed object, in recurring at all to his mathematical studies, was the acquisition of so much geometry, trigonometry, and conic-sections, as would enable him thoroughly to comprehend the entire scope of the reasoning in Maclaurin's "Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries." For this, indeed, his college studies had in a great measure prepared him; and there would have been but little to learn, could he have been satisfied to proceed as students often do. But it was not in his nature to advance, unless he ascertained the firmness of the ground at every step. He reasoned philosophically, for instance, on the nature of ratios and proportions; so that we had to clear our way through the recondite lectures of Barrow relative to those points, before we could advance to trigonometry. His logical habits, also, made him very reluctant to pass over any geometrical proposition, in which he could not trace the analysis as well as the synthesis. In this manner, and with such views, we went through the proposed course. Of what utility all this was ultimately to Mr. Hall, I cannot precisely say; but I can testify that it was of permanent advantage to his mathematical preceptor, who had not previously formed the habit of tracing apparent results to their foundation; but who, from that period, pursued science with a new interest, kept his eye more steadily upon ultimate principles, and learnt to value such researches quite as much for their intellectual discipline as for their practical benefit.*

In reference to the philosophy of mind, after we had gone slightly over Locke's Essay, his Conduct of the

* Shortly after my removal to Woolwich, I invited my late valued friend, Dr. Hutton, to dine with Mr. Hall, at my house. Mr. Hall, for the purpose of drawing the Doctor into conversation, asked him a few questions suggested by some of Barrow's Disquisitions in reference to mathematical measure, and its application to force, momentum &c. They essentially involved the metaphysics of the subjects of inquiry He also expatiated upon the imaginative, as well as the rational process, involved in the genesis of curves by motion, as taught by Barrow, and Newton. The next day Dr. Hutton said to me, "What an extraordinary man that friend of yours is! Why, he was born to be a mathematician. If you could persuade him to give himself up to the sciences, as Priestley did, he would teach us all something."

Understanding, and Watts's Ontology, which I had before read, we studied Berkeley, Wollaston, Hartley, Andrew Baxter, Reid, some portions of Bacon's Essays, and of his Treatise on the Advancement of Learning; or rather, I should say, I had the advantage of learning what was most or least valuable in each and all of these, from this admirable commentator. We were about to proceed to Search's (Abraham Tucker's) "Light of Nature,"* when some circumstances, which I cannot recall to mind, rendered it inconvenient for us thus to meet, and brought these delightful readings and commentaries to a close. We did not then go through any of Dugald Stewart's works, Mr. Hall regarding him as an elegant expositor of Reid, but greatly inferior in originality. From Bacon's Essays he used to read passages aloud, with the warmest expressions of commendation: his *philosophical* works he thought much overrated as to their influence in diffusing the true spirit of the inductive philosophy.

I must not omit to specify, as a peculiarity in the structure of Mr. Hall's mind, that although in every important case he detected and placed in the utmost prominence, an essential defect in the reasoning, a too rapid generalization, or any other unwarrantable deduction, that occurred in Berkeley, or Watts, or Hartley, he was very slow to perceive, very reluctant to admit, any such in the writings of Andrew Baxter. The reader who is conversant with such speculations will recollect, that in the second volume of Baxter's book on "the Soul," he affirms that our dreams are prompted by separate immaterial beings, and defends his theory with much ingenuity. As we advanced in Baxter's arguments, Mr. Hall exclaimed, "this is very beautiful, Sir, yet, I apprehend there must "be some flaw in the reasoning." I suggested one or two objections; he showed immediately that they could not apply. On our next meeting, he accosted me with, "Well, Sir, have you detected any fallacy in Baxter's

* Mr. Hall characterized this as a work in which the noblest philosophy was brought down by a master-hand, and placed within the reach of every man of sound understanding.

Theory?" 'Yes, I think I have.' This, however, was soon disposed of, and then another and another. I at length referred to Dugald Stewart's Theory, after examining which, he said, "I do not think this tenable, but I "suppose it must be admitted that Baxter does not *quite* "make out his case. Yet he was a man of great acu- "men—why did the Scotch philosophers run him down "so?"

Still farther to illustrate Mr. Hall's character, his turn of thought and expression, I will now bring together a few such incidents and short remarks, occurring between 1796 and 1803, as present themselves most vividly to my mind.

It will already have appeared that benevolence was a prevailing characteristic. When he had aided a poor man to the full extent of his own pecuniary means, he would sometimes apply to one of his affluent friends. "Poor ——— "is in great distress: some of his family are ill, and he can- "not supply proper necessaries. Lend me five shillings for "the poor fellow: I will pay you again in a fortnight, un- "less in the mean time you find that the case deserves your "help, and then the donation shall become yours."

His disapprobation of avarice bore a natural relation to his own benevolence. Being informed that a rich man in the neighbourhood, who was by no means celebrated for his liberality, had attended to a tale of distress without relieving it, he said, "Yes, yes: he would listen, but without inclin- "ing his head. He may lend a distant ear to the murmur- "ings from the vale beneath, but he remains like a moun- "tain covered with perpetual snow."

On another occasion a person, talking to him of one whom they both knew, and who was very penurious, said—"Poor "wretch! you might put his soul into a nut-shell." "Yes, "Sir, (Mr. Hall replied,) and even then it would creep out "at a maggot-hole."

His love of sincerity in words and actions were constantly apparent. Once, while he was spending an evening at the house of a friend, a lady who was there on a visit, retired, that her little girl, of four years old, might go to bed. She returned in about half an hour, and said to a lady near her—'She is gone to sleep. I put on my night-cap, and lay down by her, and she soon dropped off.'—Mr. Hall, who overheard this, said,—"Excuse me, Madam: do you wish your "child to grow up a liar?" 'Oh dear no, Sir; I should be "shocked at such a thing.' "Then bear with me while I "say, you must never *act* a lie before her; children are very "quick observers, and soon learn that that which assumes "to be what it is not, is a lie, whether acted or spoken." This was uttered with a kindness which precluded offence, yet with a seriousness that could not be forgotten.

His dislike to compliments was thus expressed:—"In "compliments two and two *do not* make four; and twenty "and twenty fall very far short of forty. Deal not, then, in "that deceitful arithmetic."

It was said in Mr. Hall's hearing that 'compliments were pleasing truths, and flatteries pleasing untruths.' He remarked—"Neither of them are *pleasing* to a man of reflec- "tion, for the falsehoods in this case so nearly assume the "semblance of truth, that one is perplexed to tell which is "given; and no man is pleased with perplexity."

"You remember Mr. ———, Sir,' 'Yes, very well.' "Were you aware of his fondness for brandy-and-water?" "'No.' "It was a sad habit: but it grew out of his love "of story-telling; and that, also, is a bad habit, for a min- "ister of the gospel. As he grew old, his animal spirits "flagged, and his stories became defective in vivacity: he, "therefore, took to brandy-and-water; weak enough it is "true, at first, but soon nearly 'half-and-half.' Ere long he "indulged the habit in a morning; and when he came to "Cambridge he would call upon me, and, before he had "been with me five minutes, ask for 'a little brandy-and- "water,' which was, of course, to give him a little artificial "spirits to render him agreeable in his visits to others. I "felt great difficulty; for he, you know, Sir, was much older "than I was; yet being persuaded that the ruin of his "character, if not of his peace, was inevitable, unless some- "thing was done, I resolved upon one strong effort for his "rescue. So the next time he called, and, as usual, said— "'Friend Hall, I will thank you for a glass of brandy-and- "water,' I replied,—"Call things by their right names, and "you shall have as much as you please.' 'Why, don't I "employ the right name? I ask for a glass of brandy-and- "water.' 'That is the current, but not the appropriate "name; ask for *a glass of liquid fire and distilled damnation*, "and you shall a gallon.' Poor man! he turned pale, and "for a moment seemed struggling with anger. But know- "ing that I did not mean to insult him, he stretched out his

"hand, and said—'Brother Hall, I thank you from the "bottom of my heart.' From that time he ceased to take "brandy-and-water."

In one of my early interviews with Mr. Hall, I used the word felicity three or four times in rather quick succession. He asked—"Why do you say felicity, Sir? Happiness is a "better word, more musical and genuine English, coming "from the Saxon." 'Not more musical, I think, Sir.' "Yes, "more musical, and so are words derived from the Saxon "generally. Listen, Sir: 'My heart is smitten, and withered "like grass;'—there's plaintive music. Listen again, Sir: "'Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice;'—there's "cheerful music." 'Yes, but *rejoice* is French.' "True, "but all the rest is Saxon, and rejoice is almost out of tune "with the other words. Listen again: 'Thou hast delivered "my eyes from tears, my soul from death, and my feet from "falling:' all Saxon, Sir, except *delivered*. I could think of "the word *tear*, Sir, till I wept. Then, again, for another "noble specimen, and almost all good old Saxon-English: "'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days "of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for "ever.'"

Shortly after this I was reading the original edition of Doddridge's Pneumatology, and asked Mr. Hall to lend me Kippis's edition, in which the references to other authorities, on the various topics discussed, are greatly increased. He told me that he did not possess Kippis's edition, in a tone which *then* surprised me a little, as it showed that he did not highly estimate Kippis's authority. I therefore asked, 'Was not Dr. Kippis a clever man?' "He might be "a very clever man by nature, for aught I know, but he laid "so many books upon his head that his brains could not "move." This was to me, who at that period devoted much more time to reading than to thinking, an admirable lesson.

On being asked whether he was an Arminian or a Calvinist, he said—"Neither, Sir; but I believe I recede farther "from Arminianism than from Calvinism. If a man profess "himself a decided Arminian, I infer from it that he is not "a good logician; but, Sir, it does not interfere with his "personal piety: look at good Mr. Benson, for example. I "regard the question more as metaphysical than religious."

'What do you think, Mr. Hall, of the preaching of Mr. ——?' "I can scarcely say. His sermons have no "hooks; they take no hold of the mind." 'Yet, Sir, he

"often introduces thoughts that are very pretty:' "Very "pretty! Why, Sir, a row of tea-caddies in a shop of Tun-"bridge ware is very pretty. But, what then? They are "only empty tea-caddies."

A lady who had been speaking of the Supreme Being with great familiarity, but in religious phraseology, having retired, he said, "I wish I knew how to cure that good lady of her "bad habit. I have tried, but as yet in vain. It is a great "mistake to affect this kind of familiarity with the King of "kings, and speak of him as though he were a next-door "neighbour, from the pretence of love. Mr. Boyle's well-"known habit was infinitely to be commended. And one "of our old divines, I forget which, well remarks, that 'No-"thing but ignorance can be guilty of this boldness; that "there is no divinity but in a humble fear, no philosophy "but shows itself in silent admiration.'"

When two or three gentlemen were discussing the question, whether a man of no religion can be a successful minister of the gospel, surprise was expressed that Mr. Hall remained silent. "Sir, (said he, in reply,) I would not deny "that a sermon from a bad man may sometimes do good; "but the general question does not admit of an argument. "Is it at all probable, that one who is a willing servant of "Satan (and that you know, Sir, is the hypothesis you "assume), will fight *against* him with all his might, and if not, what *success* can be rationally expected?"*

Mr. Hall did not permit his sedulous cultivation of the mind to draw him aside from the cultivation of the heart. The evidences were, indeed, very strong, that his preparation for ministerial duty was devotional as well as intellectual. Thus, his public services, by a striking gradation, for months and years, evinced an obvious growth, in mental power, in literary acquisition, and in the seriousness, affection, and ardour of a man of piety. His usefulness and his popularity increased; the church and congregation became considerably augmented; and in 1798 it was found necessary to enlarge the place of worship, to accommodate about two hundred more persons.

Early in the year 1799, a severe fever, which brought

* Several more miscellaneous gleanings from Mr. Hall's remarks in conversation are inserted in Appendix, Note A.

him, in his own apprehension, and that of his friends, to the brink of the grave, gave him an opportunity of experiencing the support yielded by the doctrines of the cross "in the near view of death and judgement." He "never before felt his mind so calm and happy." The impression was not only salutary, but abiding; and it again prompted him to the investigation of one or two points, with regard to which he had long felt himself floating in uncertainty. Thus, although he had for some years steadily and earnestly enforced the necessity of divine influence in the transformation of character, and in perseverance in a course of consistent, holy obedience, yet he spoke of it as "the influence of the Spirit of God," and never in express terms, as "the influence of the Holy Spirit." The reason was, that though he fully believed the necessity of spiritual agency in commencing and continuing the spiritual life, he doubted the doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit. But about this time he was struck with the fact, that whenever in private prayer he was in the most deeply devotional frame, "most overwhelmed with the sense that he was nothing, "and God was all in all," he always felt himself inclined to adopt a trinitarian doxology. This circumstance occurring frequently, and more frequently meditated upon in a tone of honest and anxious inquiry, issued at length in a persuasion that the Holy Spirit is really and truly God, and not an emanation. It was not, however, until 1800, that he publicly included the personality of the Holy Spirit, in his statements of the doctrine of spiritual influence.

In attempting to give some idea of the general character and style of Mr. Hall's public services, while I had the privilege of hearing him at Cambridge, I feel that I shall neither adequately describe what his preaching really was, nor even do justice to my own conceptions of it.

His manner of reading the Scriptures at the beginning of the service was not generally interesting; nor did the portion read always bear an obvious reference to the text or subject afterwards brought forward. But when passages of Scripture were quoted in the sermon, they were

so delivered as to give to their true meaning the most intelligible prominence and force.

His prayers were remarkable for their simplicity, and their devotional feeling. No person could listen to them without being persuaded that he who uttered them was really engaged in prayer, was holding communion with his God and Father in Jesus Christ. His tones and his countenance throughout these exercises were those of one most deeply imbued with a sense of his unworthiness, and throwing himself at the feet of the Great Eternal, conscious that he could present no claim for a single blessing but the blood of atonement, yet animated by the cheering hope that the voice of that blood would prevail. The structure of these prayers never indicated any preconceived plan. They were the genuine effusions of a truly devotional spirit, animated by a vivid recollection of what, in his own state, in that of the congregation, of the town and vicinity, needed most ardently to be laid before the Father of Mercies. Thus they were remarkably comprehensive, and furnished a far greater variety on the successive occasions of public worship, than those of any other minister whom I have ever known. The portions which were devoted to intercession, operated most happily in drawing the affections of his people towards himself: since they showed how completely his christian sympathy had prepared him to make their respective cases his own.

The commencement of his sermons did not excite much expectation in strangers, except they were such as recollected how the mental agitation, produced by diffidence, characterized the first sentences of some of the orators of antiquity. He began with hesitation, and often in a very low and feeble tone, coughing frequently, as though he were oppressed by asthmatic obstructions. As he proceeded his manner became easy, graceful, and at length highly impassioned; his voice also acquired more flexibility, body, and sweetness, and, in all his happier and more successful efforts, swelled into a stream of the most touching and impressive melody. The farther he advanced, the more spontaneous natural, and free from

labour, seemed the progression of thought. He announced the results of the most extensive reading, of the most patient investigation, or of the profoundest thinking, with such unassuming simplicity, yet set them in such a position of obvious and lucid reality, that the auditors wondered how things so simple and manifest should have escaped them. Throughout his sermons he kept his subject thoroughly in view, and so incessantly brought forward new arguments, or new illustrations, to confirm or to explain it, that with him amplification was almost invariably accumulative in its tendency. One thought was succeeded by another, and that by another, and another, each more weighty than the preceding, each more calculated to deepen and render permanent the ultimate impression. He could at pleasure adopt the unadorned, the ornamental, or the energetic; and indeed combine them in every diversity of modulation. In his higher flights, what he said of Burke might, with the slightest deduction, be applied to himself, "that his imperial fancy "laid all nature under tribute, and collected riches from "every scene of the creation, and every walk of art;" and at the same time, that could be affirmed of Mr. Hall which could *not* be affirmed of Mr. Burke, that he never fatigued and oppressed by gaudy and superfluous imagery. Whenever the subject obviously justified it, he would yield the reins to an eloquence more diffusive and magnificent than the ordinary course of pulpit instruction seemed to require; yet so exquisite was his perception of beauty, and so sound his judgement, that not the coldest taste, provided it were real taste, could ever wish an image omitted which Mr. Hall had introduced. His inexhaustible variety augmented the general effect. The same images, the same illustrations, scarcely ever recurred. So ample were his stores, that repetition of every kind was usually avoided; while in his illustrations he would connect and contrast what was disjoined and opposed, or distinctly unfold what was abstracted or obscure, in such terms as were generally intelligible, not only to the well-informed, but to the meanest capacity. As he advanced to his practical applications, all his

mental powers were shown in the most palpable but finely balanced exercise. His mind would, if I may so speak, collect itself and come forth with a luminous activity, proving, as he advanced, how vast, and, in some important senses, how next to irresistible those powers were. In such seasons his preaching communicated universal animation: his congregation would seem to partake of his spirit, to think and feel as he did, to be fully influenced by the presence of the objects which he had placed before them, fully actuated by the motives which he had enforced with such energy and pathos.

All was doubtless heightened by his singular rapidity of utterance,—by the rhythmical structure of his sentences, calculated at once for the transmission of the most momentous truths, for the powers of his voice, and for the convenience of breathing freely at measured intervals—and more than all, by the unequivocal earnestness and sincerity which pervaded the whole, and by the eloquence of his most speaking countenance and penetrating eye. In his sublimer strains, not only was every faculty of the soul enkindled and in entire operation, but his very features seemed fully to sympathize with the spirit, and to give out, nay, to *throw* out, thought, and sentiment, and feeling.

From the commencement of his discourse an almost breathless silence prevailed, deeply impressive and solemnizing from its singular intenseness. Not a sound was heard but that of the preacher's voice—scarcely an eye but was fixed upon him—not a countenance that he did not watch, and read, and interpret, as he surveyed them again and again with his rapid, ever-excursive glance. As he advanced and increased in animation, five or six of the auditors would be seen to rise and lean forward over the front of their pews, still keeping their eyes upon him. Some new or striking sentiment or expression would, in a few minutes, cause others to rise in like manner: shortly afterwards still more, and so on, until, long before the close of the sermon, it often happened that a considerable portion of the congregation were seen standing,—every eye directed to the preacher,

yet now and then for a moment glancing from one to another, thus transmitting and reciprocating thought and feeling:—Mr. Hall himself, though manifestly absorbed in his subject, conscious of the whole, receiving new animation from what he thus witnessed, reflecting it back upon those who were already alive to the inspiration, until all that were susceptible of thought and emotion seemed wound up to the utmost limit of elevation *on earth*,—when he would close, and they reluctantly and slowly resume their seats.*

Scenes like this I have witnessed repeatedly, so productive of intense and hallowed feeling, that, after an interval of nearly forty years, they present themselves to my mind with a more vivid influence than many of the transactions of the last month.

And surely the delightful retrospection may be safely indulged, when it is considered that these sublime exertions were made for the promotion of man's best interests —to warn the impenitent—to show to the sinner the fatal error of his way—to invite the self-condemned to the only, the all-effectual remedy—to console and encourage the faithful—to distribute the bread of life among

* Striking evidences of the most stimulating immediate impression frequently occurred. I specify only two examples.

In 1812, Mr. Hall, who then resided at Leicester, paid one of his periodical visits to Bristol, and as usual, often preached at Broadmead. He delivered a most solemn and impressive sermon on the text "Dead in trespasses and sins;" of which the concluding appeals were remarkably sublime and awful. The moment he had delivered the last sentence, Dr. Ryland, then the pastor of the church, hastened part of the way up the pulpit stairs, and, while the tears trickled down his venerable face, exclaimed with a vehemence which astonished both the preacher and the congregation,—"Let all that are alive in Jerusalem pray for the dead that they may live!"

In 1814, Mr. Hall, while preaching among his old friends at Cambridge, just before he commenced the application of his sermon, uttered a short, but very fervent ejaculatory prayer, during which the whole congregation arose from their seats. Mr. Hall seemed surprised for a moment, and but for a moment, and remained in prayer for about five minutes. He then resumed his sermon, and continued preaching for more than twenty minutes, in such a strain of magnificent and overwhelming eloquence, as the extraordinary incident might be expected to produce from powers and feelings like his, the whole congregation standing until the close of the sermon.

those who must otherwise perish—to "build up the "church in her most holy faith;" when it is known also, that while men of taste and intellect were both gratified and instructed, the uncultivated rustic heard, and understood, and "received the Word of Life," and went on his way rejoicing. Numerous and diversified as were the feelings excited by this extraordinary preacher, none were more prevailing than surprise that one so richly endowed should seem so utterly unconscious of it, and gratitude that the Great Head of the church should have called such a man to his service, and placed him in so important a station as Cambridge, when his intellectual powers seemed to have nearly attained their full maturity and vigour.

I must not, I perceive, allow myself to sketch the difference between his sermons and his expositions, or between his preaching at Cambridge and in the neighbouring villages: nor must I dwell upon the weekly evening services, when he met a few of his people, chiefly of the poorer classes, in the vestry of his place of worship, and, in a strain of the most chaste and simple eloquence, comforted and instructed them in the "things pertaining to the kingdom of God."* The diversity of his powers, the sincerity of his character, the warmth of his love to God and man, were in all alike apparent: and no one that was not the victim of prejudice, or the slave of sin, could have seen him engaged in the service of God, without being ready to testify, "this man must have read much, thought much, and prayed much," to be thus admirably furnished for his great work.

It would be highly instructive and gratifying to know by what process so finished a preacher, so exquisite and tasteful a writer, as Mr. Hall, prepared his respective

* The topics of these evening lectures were often biographical. The lives and characters of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Hannah, Samuel, Ruth, Daniel, &c., were briefly delineated, and made the basis of some useful practical reflections. Whenever the subject would fairly allow it, these reflections had an appropriate bearing upon the duties, the trials, and perplexities of persons in humble life. The sermon on "John fulfilled his course," inserted in this collection, is very analogous in its character to the discourses to which I here refer; but its commencement is more elaborate.

compositions for the pulpit and the press. But the reluctance with which he spoke either of himself or of his occupations, deprives us of much of this desirable information. At the time when our intercourse was most frequent and unrestrained, I have often been with him while he was preparing for the pulpit, and have occasionally ventured to ask him a few questions; his answers, always frank and elucidatory, however concise, enabled me, by means, also, of frequent reference to his notes on different sermons which I heard delivered, to form tolerably satisfactory conjectures as to the course pursued. He then stated, as he since has to different friends, that he never proceeded even to think of adopting a specific text, as fitted for a sermon, until the matter it presented stood out in the form of a particular, distinct, and precise topic; he could then take it up and lay it down as he pleased. Of his extraordinary power of abstraction I have spoken in another place.* By its means he could, at pleasure, insulate, nay, in a manner enclose himself, from every thing around him; and thus pursue his mental operations. It was usual with him to have five or six subjects under simultaneous training; to either of which he could direct his attention as inclination or necessity required. The grand division of thought, the heads of a sermon, for example, he would trace out with the most prominent lines of demarcation; and these for some years supplied all the hints that he needed in the pulpit, except on extraordinary occasions.† To these grand divisions he referred, and upon them suspended all the subordinate trains of thought. The latter, again, appear to have been of two classes altogether distinct; outline trains of thought, and trains into which much of the detail was interwoven. In the outline train, the whole plan was carried out and completed as to the argument:

* In a note that precedes his sermon on Modern Infidelity.

† As an example, both of comprehensive miniature outline, and of provision in the notes for accurate expression, when he wished to state with clearness and p ecision his theological sentiments on a most momentous point, see Mr. Hall's own analysis of the sermon on John i. 35, 36, and the language actually employed in the sermon itself.

in that of detail, the illustrations, images, and subordinate proofs, were selected and classified; and in those instances where the force of an argument, or the probable success of a general application, would mainly depend upon the language, even that was selected and appropriated, sometimes to the precise collocation of the words. Of some sermons, no portions whatever were wrought out thus minutely; the language employed in preaching being that which spontaneously occurred at the time: of others, this minute attention was paid to the verbal structure of nearly half: of *a few*, the entire train of preparation, almost from the beginning to the end, extended to the very sentences. Yet the marked peculiarity consisted in this, that the process, even when thus directed to minutiæ in his more elaborate efforts, did not require the use of the pen; at least at the time to which these remarks principally apply.* For, Mr. Hall had a singular faculty for continuous mental composition, apart from the aid which writing supplies. Words were so disciplined to his use, that the more he thought on any subject, the more closely were the topics of thought associated with appropriate terms and phrases; and it was manifest that he had carefully disciplined his mind to this as an independent exercise, probably to avoid the pain and fatigue which always attended the process of writing. Whenever he pleased he could thus pursue the consecution to a great extent, in sentences, many of them perfectly formed and elaborately finished, as he went along, and easily called up again by memory, as occasion required; not, however, in their separate character, as elements of language, but because of their being fully worked into the substance of thought. It hence happened that the excellence which other persons often

* Mr. Hall doubtless varied his manner of preparation in different periods. For three or four years after his settlement at Leicester, he wrote down nearly a third of the sermon, and left all the rest to flow from the outline plan while he was preaching. But for some years afterwards he seldom allowed his notes to exceed two pages, and is thought to have indulged himself more than at any other period of his life in entirely extemporaneous eloquence. At that time his sermons were especially distinguished by simplicity and pathos.

attain as to style, from the use of the pen, in written, visible composition, (employing the eye upon words, instead of fixing the memory upon substantial mental product, and, it may be, diminishing the intellectual power by substituting for one of its faculties a mechanical result,) he more successfully and uniformly attained by a purely meditative process. And I am persuaded that if he could have *instantly* impressed his trains of thought upon paper, with the incorporated words, and with the living spirit in which they were conceived, hundreds if not thousands of passages would have been preserved, as chaste and polished in diction, as elastic and energetic in tone, as can be selected from any part of his works. What, however, could not thus be accomplished by the pen, has been achieved, as to immediate impression, in the pulpit; and hence his celebrity, unequalled, in modern times, as a sacred orator.

In preparing for the press, the process was in many respects essentially different. There was, from the outset, a struggle to overcome the reluctance to write, arising from the anticipation of increased pain, which he knew *must* be endured so long as he was engaged in the mechanical act, and at every return to the labour he had a new reluctance to surmount. There was, moreover, the constant effort to restrain a mind naturally active, ardent, and rapid in all its movements, to a slow progression; nay, a farther effort, and, to a mind so constituted, a very irksome one, to bring the thoughts back from the ultimate issue to which they were incessantly hastening, and cause them to pass and repass, again and again, by a comparatively sluggish course, the successive links in a long chain. Nor was this all. He had formed for himself, as a writer, an ideal standard of excellence, which could not be reached:* his perception of beauty in composition was so delicate and refined, that in regard to his own productions it engendered perhaps a fastidious taste; and, deep and prevailing as was his humility, he was not insensible to the value of a high reputation, and, therefore, cautiously guarded against the risk of diminishing his usefulness among certain classes of readers, by consigning any production to the world that had not been thoroughly subjected to the *labor limæ*. Hence the extreme slowness with which he composed for the press; writing, improving, rejecting the improvement; seeking another, rejecting it; recasting whole sentences and pages; often recurring precisely to the original phraseology; and still oftener repenting, when it was too late, that he had not done so. All this he lamented as a serious defect, declaring that it gave, in his own view, to his written compositions an air of stiffness and formality which deprived him of all complacency in them. And I cannot but feel persuaded that, notwithstanding the exquisite harmony and beauty which characterize every thing that he has published, they were, even in point of felicity of diction, and the majestic current and force of language, inferior to the "winged words" that often escaped from his lips, when "his soul was enlarged" in the discharge of ministerial duty.

* "I am tormented with the desire of writing better than I can."

May we not suggest a probable reason for this, by observing that when Mr. Hall stood forth as the minister of the sanctuary, he placed the fire upon the altar in the humble confidence that it would be kept alive by the communication of grace and spirit from on high; but that, when he came before the public as an author, he sometimes extinguished his own flame, pure and ethereal as it notwithstanding was, in his efforts to ornament the vase in which he held it up to view.*

But I must not dwell longer on these topics.

In the beginning of the year 1799, Mr. Hall had the happiness of renewing personal intercourse with his early friend. Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Mackintosh, being about to deliver a course of lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, deemed it expe-

* That Mr. Hall did not always require much time for the production of elegant and spirited writing, interspersed with passages of remarkable beauty, and the most elaborate polish, is manifest from his two early political publications, both composed *currente calamo*, and each yielding as powerful and finished specimens of style and thought as can be drawn from his Works.

dient, for the completion of some of the extensive researches which that important undertaking required. to reside for a few months at Cambridge, that he might consult the more valuable of the college libraries, as well as the public library belonging to the University generally. Another distinguished individual, the late Dr. Samuel Parr, spent several weeks at Cambridge at the same time, for the purpose of visiting some of his old friends, of associating with Mr. Mackintosh, and of becoming personally acquainted with Mr. Hall, whose character he had long known and highly valued. Mr. Hall, pleased to refresh his spirits in the society of his beloved fellow-student, and by no means unwilling to glean something from the stores of so profound a scholar as Dr. Parr, often spent his evenings with these two eminent men, and a few members of the University, who were invited to their select parties, and with whom from that time he cultivated an intimacy.

This circumstance led to the formation of Mr. Hall's most inveterate habit—that of smoking. Previously to this period he had always censured the practice in the strongest terms; but, on associating with Dr. Parr, his aversion to what he used to denominate "an odious custom," soon passed away. The Doctor was always enveloped in a dense cloud of smoke, from sun-rise until midnight; and no person could remain in his company long without great inconvenience, unless he learnt to smoke in self-defence. Mr. Hall, therefore, made the attempt, and quickly overcame every obstacle. I well recollect entering his apartment just as he had acquired this happy art; and seeing him sit at ease, the smoke rising above his head in lurid, spiral volumes, he inhaling and apparently enjoying its fragrance, I could not suppress my astonishment. "O Sir, (said he) I am "only qualifying myself for the society of a Doctor of "Divinity; and this, holding up the pipe, is my test of "admission."

Mr. Hall's Cambridge friends were divided in their feelings and wishes with regard to this new practice. The majority approved it, from a belief that the narcotic influence of tobacco would mitigate the pain which he had so long endured. Others, apprehending that his habit of converting *every thing* into a source of enjoyment would transform him into an unremitting smoker, and that injury to his health would ensue, ventured to expostulate with him. I belonged to the latter class, and put into his hands Dr. Adam Clarke's pamphlet on "The Use and Abuse of Tobacco," with a request that he would read it. In a few days he returned it, and at once, as if to preclude discussion, "Thank you, Sir, for Adam "Clarke's pamphlet. I can't refute his arguments, and "I can't give up smoking."

We now approach the time when Mr. Hall had acquired a signal extension of celebrity. Many who had hailed the French Revolution of 1789 as an event productive of extensive benefit, were compelled to admit, after a few years, that the great leaders in that Revolution, and still more their followers, committed grievous blunders, and grosser crimes, from the want of higher than political principles to control their actions. Yet, in the false security which some felt, and others insidiously aimed to inspire, it was suspected but by few, that much of our periodic literature had, under the plea of encouraging free discussion, become irreligious in its tendency, and that various unprincipled demagogues in London, and the large manufacturing towns, not only held up to admiration the conduct of the detestable actors in "the reign of terror," but were constantly exerting themselves to disseminate democracy and atheism conjointly. Such, however, was the fact. From 1795 to 1799, debating rooms were opened in various parts of the metropolis, in which the most barefaced infidelity was taught, and to which the lower classes were invited, often on Sunday evenings, by a variety of specious allurements. Mr. Hall was no sooner convinced of the existence of these sources of evil, and of the mischief they produced, than he began to use the voice of warning, in his private intercourse among his people, and to impress upon such of the young as he feared had received a sceptical bias, that of all fanaticism, the fanaticism of infi-

delity then prevalent was at once the most preposterous and the most destructive.

Mr. Hall's persuasion of the continuance and growth of this infidel spirit, induced him to preach and publish his celebrated sermon on "Modern Infidelity;" which was not, therefore, as many affirmed, a hasty production, written under excited feelings and false alarms, but the deliberate result of a confirmed belief, that the most strenuous efforts were required to repel mischief so awfully and insidiously diffused.

Before the publication of this sermon, its author had fully "counted the cost" as to the obloquy which it would bring upon him from various quarters; but he did not at all anticipate its extraordinary success, and the corresponding extension of his reputation. As repeated editions were called for, he yielded his assent with great hesitation, from a fear that the copies would remain unsold; and he was the last to see, what every one else perceived, that it had carried his celebrity as a profound thinker and elegant writer far beyond the limits of the denomination to which he was so bright an ornament.

Immediately after this sermon issued from the press, the consistency and integrity of the author were vehemently attacked in several letters which appeared in the "Cambridge Intelligencer," then a popular and widely circulated newspaper. Its editor, Mr. Flower, had received in an ill spirit Mr. Hall's advice that he would repress the violent tone of his political disquisitions, and had, from other causes which need not now be developed, become much disposed to misinterpret his motives and depreciate his character. He, therefore, managed to keep alive the controversy for some months, occasionally aiding, by his own remarks, those of his correspondents who opposed Mr. Hall, and as often casting illiberal insinuations upon the individual who had stepped forward in defence of the sermon and its author. A few months after this discussion subsided, Mr. Flower, who had been summoned before the House of Lords, and imprisoned in Newgate for a libel on Bishop Watson, published an exculpatory pamphlet; in which, with a view to draw

the attention of the public as speedily as possible from his own unmanly and disingenuous conduct, while at the bar of the House, he soon passed from his personal defence to a virulent attack upon Mr. Hall, his former pastor.

Shortly afterwards, another controvertist, a Mr. Anthony Robinson, unwilling that Mr. Flower and his coadjutors should gather all the laurels in so noble a conflict, hastened into the field; and, it must be admitted, left them far behind. He published, in a pamphlet of more than sixty pages, "An Examination of Mr. Hall's Sermon." He did not bring against the preacher the positive charge of apostasy, having discrimination enough to see that it was one thing to refer the atrocities of the reign of terror to the political principles of the perpetrators, and quite another to ascribe them to their avowed and unblushing atheism. But the crimes that he imputed to Mr. Hall, were, that he was "an imitator of Mr. Burke," that he was "fierce and even savage in expression," that his "charges against atheism are unfounded," and that he taught "that it was excusable, if not meritorious, to punish men for errors in religious opinions!" For himself, he maintained, that "all men are essentially alike in moral conduct;" that the sum of all the morality of religionists is, "do good unto the household of faith, and to them only; kill, plunder, calumniate the heretics;" that "all public religions are opposed to all private morality;" that "atheism (on the contrary) tends but little to alter our moral sentiments;" and that "all religions except the belief that rewards are to be conferred upon the beneficent, and for that service exclusively, are not merely as bad, but *infinitely worse than any kind or degree of scepticism;*" because "atheism leaves every human present motive *in full force*, whilst every religion or mode of faith different from what is above expressed, changes the name and the nature of morality, saps the foundations of all benevolence, and introduces malice, hostility, and murder, *under the pretext of love to God.*" * This being

* Since the first publication of this Memoir, I have learnt, what justice to Mr. Anthony Robinson requires me to state, that, after a few

a fair specimen of the shameless impiety with which the press then teemed, we need not wonder at the applauses bestowed upon Mr. Hall, for advancing with such singular talent and ability to stem the torrent.

With the exception of a few letters from private friends, who disapproved of his denominating the Roman Catholic clergy "the Christian priesthood," every communication he received was highly gratifying, especially as it did justice to his motives. The most distinguished members of the University were loud in his praises: numerous passages in the sermon which were profound in reasoning, or touching and beautiful in expression, were read and eulogized in every college and almost every company; and the whole composition was recommended in the charges and sermons of the dignified and other clergy in terms of the warmest praise. The "Monthly Review" (then the leading critical journal), the "British Critic" (at that time under the able superintendence of Dr. Nares), and other Reviews, gave to the sermon the highest commendation. Kett in his "Elements of General Knowledge," William Belsham in his "History of Great Britain," Dr. Parr in the notes to his

years, his sentiments underwent some important changes, and he bitterly lamented his acrimonious attack upon Mr. Hall and his principles. He invariably expressed himself in the warmest terms of admiration of his talents as a preacher and author, and of veneration of his excellencies as a man. He characterized him as the most eloquent man in Britain after the death of Burke; and, on one occasion, when speaking to Mr. S. J. Button, a son of the late Rev. W. Button, of Mr. Hall, on adverting to his own treatment of him, he burst into tears, and exclaimed, "Robert Hall is not only one of the greatest, but the best of men." In a letter to the same gentleman, dated January, 1818, he says, "amongst *writers* in the class of divines, Bishop Jeremy Taylor is the only man, who is at all, in the constituents of true eloquence, to be compared to Mr. Hall." "Why is he not placed in the most conspicuous situation that the Dissenters have to give? Do they not know that his equal in public qualifications exists not in the kingdom? And amongst their numerous ministers, there is not one of severer virtue. He has had dreadful sufferings; may God grant that uninterrupted comfort may attend him to the close of life, and that every blessing may be the portion of his family." Mr. Hall, I understand, was informed of this change, and expressed much gratification that the most scornful and contemptuous of his opponents, had seen his error, and become his friend. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

celebrated "Spital Sermon," and many others, were profuse in their expressions of panegyric. From that time Mr. Hall's reputation was placed upon an eminence, which it will probably retain as long as purity and elevation of style, deeply philosophical views of the springs and motives of action, and correct theological sentiments, are duly appreciated in the world.*

Of the letters received by Mr. Hall on this occasion, the following from the pen of his friend Mackintosh, has escaped the ravages of time.

"*Serle Street, Lincoln's Inn,*
"26 *March*, 1800.

"Dear Hall,

"From the enclosed letter, you will see the opinion "which the Bishop of London† has formed of your sermon,

* That the reader may be put in possession of what was most interesting in the panegyrical notices to which I have above alluded, I shall insert the substance of two reviews written by Sir Jas. Mackintosh, and of the often-cited note of Dr. Parr, neither of which is now easily attainable, in a note at the end of this Memoir. See Note B. Appendix.

On the publication of Dr. Parr's "Spital Sermon," I took a copy of it to Mr. Hall; and sat down at his table while he hastily turned over the leaves. He was greatly amused by the cursory examination, but had evidently no expectation that any of the notes referred to himself. "What a profusion of Greek, Sir! Why, if I were to write so, they "would call me a pedant; but it is all natural in Parr." "What a "strange medley, Sir. The gownsmen will call him *Farrago Parr*." At length I saw his eye glance upon the notes which relate to himself. His countenance underwent the most rapid changes, indicating surprise, regret, and pity: in a very few minutes he threw down the book, and exclaimed, "Poor man! poor man! I am very sorry for him! He is "certainly insane, Sir! Where were his friends, Sir? Was there no-"body to sift the folly out of his notes, and prevent its publication? "Poor man!"

If Dr. Parr's admiration of Mr. Hall indicated insanity, it continued to show itself until his death; for in his Will he says, 'I bequeath a mourning ring to the Rev. Robert Hall, as a mark of my reverence for his exemplary virtues, and of my admiration of his sublime and hallowed eloquence.'

† Dr. Porteus. This enclosure is not now extant. A few months afterwards, Mr. Hall visited the bishop at Fulham, and shortly after his return to Cambridge, he received a copy of Kennicott's Hebrew Bible, two vols., folio, in the first of which the bishop had inscribed this testimony in his own hand: "These volumes are presented as an appropriate intimation of that applause, veneration, and gratitude, that are due to the acute detector, perspicuous impugner, and victorious antagonist, of the sceptical, infidel, and anti-christian sophists of the present times."

" and you will observe that he does some justice to your " merit. Mr. Archdeacon Eaton, to whom the letter was " written, has allowed me to send it to you; and I thought " it might not be disagreeable to you to have it, as the " opinion of a man, not indeed of very vigorous understand- " ing, but an elegant writer, a man of taste and virtue, not " to mention his high station in the church.

" I last night had a conversation about the sermon with a ' man of much greater talents, at a place where theological, ' or even literary discussions, are seldom heard. It was " with *Mr. Windham, at the Duchess of Gordon's rout.* I " asked him whether he had read it. He told me that he " had, that he had recommended it to every body; and, " among others, on that very day, to the new Bishop of " Bangor,* who had dined with him. He said that he was " exceedingly struck with the style, but still more with the " matter. He particularly praised the passage on vanity as " an admirable commentary on Mr. Burke's observations on " vanity in his character of Rousseau. He did not like it " the worse, he said, for being taken from the source of all " good, as he considered Mr. Burke's works to be. He " thought, however, that you had carried your attack on " vanity rather too far. He had recommended the sermon " to Lord Grenville, who seemed sceptical about any thing " good coming from the pastor of a Baptist congregation, " especially at Cambridge.

" This, you see, is the unhappy impression which Priest- " ley has made, and which, if you proceed as you have so " nobly begun, you will assuredly efface. But you will " never do all the good which it is in your power to do, " unless you assert your own importance, and call to mind " that as the Dissenters have no man comparable to you, it " is your province to guide them, and not to be guided by " their ignorance and bigotry. I am almost sorry you " thought any apology due to those senseless bigots who " blamed you for compassion [towards] the clergy of France, " as innocent sufferers and as martyrs to the Christian faith " during the most barbarous persecution that has fallen upon " Christianity, perhaps since its origin, but certainly since " its establishment by Constantine. * * * " * * * * * I own I thought " well of Horsley when I found him, in his charge, call " these unhappy men ' our Christian Brethren :' the bishops " and clergy of the persecuted church of France! This is " the language of truth. This is the spirit of Christianity.

* Dr. Cleaver.

" I met with a combination in Ovid, the other day, which " would have suited your sermon. Speaking of the human ' descendants of the giants, he says—

" Sed et illa propago
" Contemptrix superûm, sæváque avidissima cædis
" Et violenta fuit. Scires è sanguine natos."
MET. I. 160.

" The union of ferocity with irreligion is agreeable to your " reasoning.

" I am going to send copies of my third edition* to Paley " and Watson, to Fox and the Lord Chancellor.† I should " like to send copies of your sermon with them. If you will " direct six copies to be sent here, I shall distribute them " in such a manner as will, I think, not be hurtful.

" Mrs. Mackintosh joins me in the most kind and respect- " ful remembrance. Believe me ever,

" Dear Hall,
" Your affectionate friend,
" JAMES MACKINTOSH."

Mr. Mackintosh continued to evince both the steadiness of his friendship for Mr. Hall, and the high value which he set upon this Sermon, by frequently quoting it and applying it to the elucidation of the Lectures which he was then delivering in Lincoln's-Inn. Several of his auditors were, in consequence, induced sometimes to spend their Sundays at Cambridge, that they might listen to the pulpit instructions of the individual of whom they had heard so much. Many also of the members of the University, including not merely under-graduates, but college fellows and tutors, were often seen at the Baptist place of worship. These sometimes amounted to fifty or sixty: and a few of them attended so constantly upon the afternoon service that they became almost regarded as regular hearers. Among the latter, some have since become distinguished men, and occupy important stations either in the church or in the public service, as statesmen or senators.

The attendance of so many university students upon the services of a Dissenting Minister, at length began to

* Of the Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations.
† The Earl of Rosslyn.

excite alarm among the "Heads of Houses;" of whom a meeting was summoned to consider the expediency of interposing some authoritative measure to prevent this irregularity. But Dr. Mansel, then master of the largest college, Trinity, and afterwards Bishop of Bristol, "declared that he could not be a party in such a measure: he admired and revered Mr. Hall, both for his talents and for his genuine liberality; he had ascertained that his preaching was not that of a partisan, but of an enlightened minister of Christ; and therefore if he were not the Master of Trinity he should certainly often attend himself; and that even now he had experienced a severe struggle before he could make up his mind to relinquish so great a benefit." Shortly after this he personally thanked Mr. Hall, not only for his sermon, but for his general efforts in the Christian cause; and through the medium of a common friend, endeavoured to induce him to enter the established church. This, I believe, was the only *direct* attempt to persuade Mr. Hall to conform.

None of these circumstances were permitted to draw Mr. Hall aside from his ordinary course. His studies, his public duties, his pastoral visits, were each assigned their natural place, as before. If there were any change, it was manifest in his increased watchfulness over himself, and perhaps, in giving a *rather* more critical complexion than before to certain portions of his morning expositions, and in always concluding them with such strong practical appeals as might be suited to a congregation of mixed character.*

If I do not greatly mistake, however, his sentiments with regard to controversy in general were considerably modified from this period. The language of the preface to his sermon, on the advantages of union, was in truth the language of his heart and conduct; so that he

* By this time Mr. Hall's character for orthodoxy had become so completely established, that he was invited, on his visits to London, to preach for the Rev. Abraham Booth, a rigid investigator of the claims of all whom he admitted to his pulpit. On these occasions, the excellent John Newton, Mr. Gunn, and other pious clergymen residing in London, gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of hearing him preach.

abstained from public discussions except on questions that seemed of vital importance, either in regard to fundamental truth, or the essential privileges of christians. Having learnt that one of the severest trials of human virtue is the trial of controversy, he resolved, on occasions when silence became inexpedient or censurable, not to repel even injustice and misrepresentation in an angry spirit. Thus when he undertook the refutation of Bishop Horsley's charge, that village preachers among methodists and dissenters were teachers of insubordination and sedition, indignant as he doubtless felt at so unjust an insinuation, he opposed it in a manner as remarkable for the conciliatory spirit which it exhibits, as for the singular train of original thought, and cogent argument, which runs through that interesting fragment.*

In little more than two years after the publication of the sermon on Modern Infidelity, Mr. Hall again appeared before the public as an author. The transient peace of Amiens was celebrated by a general thanksgiving throughout England on the 1st of June, 1802. In the sermon preached by Mr. Hall on that occasion, he endeavoured first to awaken the gratitude of his auditors by a most touching picture of the horrors of war, from which Europe had just escaped; and then to apply the gratitude so excited, to acts of benevolence. I have adverted in another place to Mr. Hall's reasons for preaching that sermon *memoriter*, without deviation, from his own written copy. I recur to it for a moment, merely to state that though it was delivered with a most impressive dignity, and with less rapidity than that to which he usually yielded himself, yet, in one or two parts, he obviously felt great difficulty in checking his inclination either to modify his language, or to expatiate more at large. This was especially observable at the passage commencing with "Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villages in this neighbourhood." He mentioned afterwards, that the strug-

* That on Village preaching, commenced in 1801, and published in Vol. VI. of this collection.

gle between his desire to correct what he, just then, saw was "a confusion in the grouping," and his determination "not to deviate from his lesson," was such as rendered it almost impossible for him to proceed. To this kind of perplexity he never again exposed himself.

The nation had scarcely tasted the blessings of peace, when a dispute on one of the articles of the treaty of Amiens involved us in a fresh war with the French. Buonaparte, then First Consul, aware of the British ascendency at sea, resolved first to attack our continental dominions. He, also, seized on the persons and property of the numerous English who had visited France during the brief interval of peace, detaining them as prisoners of war; and then menaced this country with invasion. So strange, and in some respects, so atrocious a commencement of hostilities, had a singular effect in melting down dissension, and diffusing a spirit of almost unexampled unanimity, among all ranks and classes of the community. To adopt Mr. Hall's emphatic language on that occasion: "It was a struggle for existence, not "for empire. It must surely be regarded as a happy "circumstance that the contest did not take this shape "at an earlier period, while many were deceived by cer-"tain specious pretences of liberty into a favourable opin-"ion of our enemy's designs. The popular delusion had "passed; the most unexampled prodigies of guilt had dis-"pelled it; and, after a series of rapine and cruelty, *had* "*torn from every heart the last fibres of mistaken partiality.*" At this momentous period Mr. Hall's love of his country was again signally evinced. The same high appreciation of the value of liberty, which in early life led him to defend the British constitution from the evils to which he then thought it exposed, led him on this occasion to excite his countrymen to oppose the assaults of one whom he regarded as the greatest despot of modern times, and to imprint on their minds "a deep abhorrence of his perfidy and cruelty." On the fast day, 19th October, 1803, he preached at Bristol, where he was then on a visit, a sermon afterwards published, "The Sentiments proper to the Present Crisis," which had the happiest effect in

enkindling the flame of generous, active patriotism.

This sermon, perhaps, excited more general admiration than any of the author's former productions; on account of its masterly exposure of prevailing errors, its original and philosophical defence of some momentous truths, and its remarkable appropriateness to the exigencies of the crisis. The last ten pages were thought by many (and by Mr. Pitt, among the number) to be fully equal in genuine eloquence to any passage of the same length that can be selected from either ancient or modern orators. They were reprinted in various periodical publications, and widely circulated in every direction. Some exceptions were taken by a few persons, to a phrase or two, which were thought of a heathenish tendency; these he endeavoured to remove by a few explanatory remarks, inserted in the preface to the second and subsequent editions of the sermon.

In an old manuscript of Mr. Hall's, containing outline notes of sermons preached by him in 1801, 1802, and 1803, scarcely any of them occupying more than two pages, there is inserted the first rude sketch of this valuable sermon, and, at the distance of several pages, a few hints of thoughts and sentences designed to be introduced near the close.

"I. Particulars in which our notions are wrong, or, 'we 'speak not aright,' with regard to national judgements.
"1. Political speculations on the secondary causes of our 'calamities, exclusive of a regard to the hand of God.
"2. Wanton and indiscriminate censure of the conduct 'of our rulers.
"We are permitted within ..... limits to animadvert on 'the measures of government.
"3. A confidence in an arm of flesh.
"Cursed is man, &c.
"4. A reliance on our supposed superior virtue.
"5. General lamentations on the corruptions of the age.
"Right sentiments. An acknowledgement of the justice 'and dominion of God.
"Sincere confession of our sins. Dan. ix. 8. Zech. x. 11, &c."

Such was the original synopsis. The hints intended to be worked in towards the close of the sermon, are as below.

"Eternal God! (O thou,) who hast at once declared thy-
"self the God of Peace and the Lord of Hosts, go forth with
"our armies, and shelter (shield) their heads in the day of
"battle: give them (endow them with) that undaunted
"courage, that ..... from trouble which springs from a
"sense of thy presence.

"Under thy conduct, and fighting under thy banners, we
"will employ all the resources which lie within our reach,
" .... without trusting in an arm of flesh ..... while we
"behold with the eye of faith, what thy prophet discerned
"in ancient times, the plains filled with horses of fire and
"chariots of fire.

"There is surely not one person here who will tempt
"himself to ..... by the fear of death, when he reflects
"that, in the failure of this great enterprise, should the cri-
"sis arrive, he must feel a thousand deaths in the extinction
"of religion, in the spoliation of property, in the violation
"of chastity, in the confusion of all orders ..... when all
"that is noble or holy will be trampled upon ..... when
"death would be sought with the avidity of ..... when the
"enemies' triumphs will be felt in ..... mourn ..... free-
"dom entombed."

I have here presented the incipient germs of thought and expression in this extraordinary production, from a persuasion that the man of research into the operations of intellect will be deeply interested on comparing them with their finished result, as exhibited in the complete sermon.

On looking back upon the preceding pages, I perceive that I shall have laid myself open to the charge of dwelling too long upon that portion of Mr. Hall's life during which I also resided at Cambridge. Let me simply observe, then, that it was the portion in which his fine character arose, by the means I have been tracing, to the place that he deserved in public estimation; and that I may be forgiven if I have thus dwelt upon that bright period of my own existence in which I was open to the constant influence of association with one so pre-eminent in mental and moral excellence. Yet I am not disposed to allow the interesting memory of a long friendship to interfere with biographical fidelity. I have spoken of Mr. Hall's richer qualities agreeably to the estimate I then formed, but, with a conviction that they had not at that period reached their entire and mature development. I shall now advert to a few of his defects, but with an equally strong persuasion that they diminished as his age, and judgement, and piety advanced.

I have already remarked that Mr. Hall was impetuous in argument. I must here add that he *sometimes* contended more for victory than for truth. I never knew him voluntarily take what he believed to be the wrong side of an argument, for the sake of showing how adroitly he could carry on the advocacy of any opinions which he, for the moment, took the fancy to maintain; but, if ever he precipitated himself into the assertion of erroneous sentiment, he would strenuously defend his opinion; and, on such occasions, would seem more pleased with perplexing and confounding his opponents, than with faithfully endeavouring to set either them or himself right. This habit was very much restrained, if not altogether overcome, in the latter part of his life. Be it observed, however, that at no time did it tempt him to trifle with the sanctities of religion.

Besides this yielding to the temptation of making the matter of truth and error a prize for contest, there was another thing which, in social life, depreciated the *practical* value of his great ability, namely, a random carelessness in throwing out opinions and estimates of subjects, books, or men. Many of those opinions were graphically correct, and highly valuable, and they were usually clothed in an aphorismatic terseness of language; yet, were too often such, that plain, credulous listeners for instruction, regarding him as an oracle, would leave him with incorrect and fallacious notions of the topics on which he had spoken, and would, therefore, be strangely perplexed two or three weeks afterwards, on hearing, or hearing reported, contrary opinions on the same subjects stated by him subsequently, when farther investigation had corrected his judgement. Sometimes, too, especially when indulging in panegyric, he would, even in conversation, give himself up to the feelings of the

orator, and allow his fancy to escape into the *ideal*, sketching the picture then existing in his own thoughts, rather than that of the individual whom he imagined himself describing.

It was also much to be regretted, that when he was in company he did not keep habitually in view the good which his great talents and high character qualified him to impart. His conversation, though always conveying information on the various subjects generally brought forward in cultivated society, did not indicate the prevailing purpose of leading the minds of others in a right direction. Or, if he entered society with this determination, he frequently permitted the circumstances into which he was thrown, to divert him from his purpose, thus giving away his admirable conversational powers to the mere casual train of topics, many of them trivial in interest. There could not but be various acute remarks, and every now and then a piece of valuable disquisition, or a most important sentiment, or an eloquent flow of striking observations; yet there was not a systematic bearing toward positive utility. Often, indeed, has Mr. Hall lamented this defect: often, as we have been returning from a party which he had kept alive by the brilliancy and variety of his observations, has he said, "Ah! Sir, I have again contributed to the loss of an "evening, as to everything truly valuable: go home with "me, that we may spend at least one hour in a manner "which becomes us."

It should be added, however, that it was only in larger parties that this occurred. I never spent an evening with him alone, or with the addition of one or two select companions, in which the sublimer purposes of religious as well as intellectual intercourse were not prevailingly kept in view.

In adverting to the deficiencies in Mr. Hall's character, I must farther remark, that he did not always seem adequately alive to *special* modes and efforts of utility. There were times when his apparent indifference must have been thought scarcely compatible with his uniform benevolence and piety, unless by the few who were thoroughly aware that his infirmities frequently compelled him to avoid active exertions, except those which fell within the range of ministerial duty: yet, at other seasons, he exerted himself so powerfully and successfully in favour of some grand object, as, in great measure, to compensate for his habitually avoiding the ordinary detail of minor operations.

His defects, on whatever occasions they showed themselves, were as remote as possible from littleness, and were such as would be most naturally found in a noble character. We may hence learn, however, that a man, though far enriched above his fellows with intellectual and spiritual endowments, still manifests the frailties of a fallen being; and that it always behoves us, therefore, with Christian discrimination, to distinguish between grace and nature, to give to God his own glory, and to refer to men their own infirmities.

But I must return from this digression. During the early months of the year 1803, the pain in Mr. Hall's back increased, both in intenseness and continuity, depriving him almost always of refreshing sleep, and depressing his spirits to an unusual degree. For some time he seriously contemplated the dissolution of his connexion with his flock; and retiring into one of the most secluded spots which he could select in Devonshire. But on one of his visits to Kettering, he consulted Dr. Kerr of Northampton, who recommended him not to relinquish his official duties, but to reside a few miles from Cambridge, and to have recourse to horse exercise. In consequence of this advice, he took a house at Shelford, a village about five miles from Cambridge; and the frequent and short journeys on horseback which thus became necessary, for a season seemed beneficial. Yet, the advantage was not of long continuance. He missed his delightful evenings spent in the society of the intelligent classes of the congregation (of whom there was a much higher proportion than in most congregations), and he missed still more, the simple, heart-refreshing remarks of the poor of his flock, whose pious converse had always been peculiarly soothing to his mind. It is true, he

there enjoyed intercourse with two excellent men, both of whom he cordially esteemed, the late Mr. James Nutter, a valuable member of his church at Cambridge, and the Rev. Thomas Thomason, afterwards much distinguished as one of the East India Company's chaplains at Calcutta.* With these friends he sometimes spent his evenings; and in company with the latter, who was Mr. Simeon's curate at Trinity Church, he frequently rode to Cambridge on the Sunday mornings, these brothers in the gospel ministry proceeding thus pleasantly, "in the "unity of the spirit," to their respective spheres of labour in the church of God. Gratifying, however, as this intercourse was, both to Mr. Hall, and his valued neighbours, it still left him too much alone, and too much exposed to all the morbid influences of a disordered body, and of a mind overstrained. Often has he been known to sit close at his reading, or yet more intensely engaged in abstract thought, for more than twelve hours in the day; so that, when one or both of his kind friends have called upon him, in the hope of drawing him from his solitude, they have found him in such a state of nervous excitement, as led them to unite their efforts in persuading him to take some mild narcotic, and retire to rest. The painful result may be anticipated. This noble mind lost its equilibrium; and he, who had so long been the theme of universal admiration, now became the subject of as extensive a sympathy. This event occurred in November, 1804. Mr. Hall was placed under the care of Dr. Arnold, of Leicester, whose attention, with the blessing of God, in about two months, restored him both to mental and bodily health.

During this afflictive suspension of his pastoral duties, his church and congregation gave the most unequivocal proofs that they had caught somewhat of his generous and exalted spirit, and that they were desirous to conduce to his welfare in temporal things, in acknowledgement of the spiritual blessings he had been the means of conveying to them. They set on foot a subscription, to

* Memoirs of his life have been recently published, by Mr. Sargent, the esteemed biographer of Henry Martyn.

which themselves contributed most liberally, and which, by the aid of other friends, became sufficient to produce, besides a life annuity of one hundred pounds, a farther sum nearly equal, vested in government securities, the latter to be at his own disposal at death: each sum being properly vested in trustees.*

In April, 1805, he resumed his ministerial functions at Cambridge: but, it being deemed inexpedient for him to re-occupy his house at Shelford, he engaged another at Foulmire, about nine miles from Cambridge. This spot, doubtless, was unwisely selected; as his opportunities of social intercourse with old and intimate friends were almost entirely cut off, and he was thus left to feed more upon his own thoughts than in any preceding part of his life. The evil did not show itself in his public ministrations, which were regarded as more devout, intellectual, and impressive, than they had ever been; nor in any diminution of relish for works in which genius stood forth in defence of religious truth;—as his exquisite critique upon Foster's Essays, written at this period, and now republished, amply evinces. But the evils resulting from solitude and a return of his old pain with more than its usual severity, ere long began to show themselves. Sleepless nights, habitual exclusion from society, a complete self-absorption, and the incessant struggle between what was due to a church and congregation which had given such signal proofs of affection for him, and what he felt to be necessary for his own preservation, a speedy removal from air and scenery that more and more impaired his health and oppressed his spirits: these, in about twelve months after his former attack at Shelford, produced a recurrence of the same malady, which again laid him aside from public duty.

He soon, however, recovered the complete balance of his mental powers, under the judicious care of the late Dr. Cox, of Fish Ponds, near Bristol. Still it was regarded as essential to the permanent possession of mental health and vigour, that he should resign the pastoral office at Cambridge, in order that he might, for a year, at

* See farther, a note to Letter 18, published in this volume.

least, seek retirement in a spot selected and cordially approved by himself, abstain from preaching, and, as far as possible, avoid all strong excitement.

Pursuant to this advice, he sent in his letter of resignation, which, with that from the church, in reply, is inserted in the present volume.

Thus terminated a connexion which had subsisted for fifteen years, and had been of great benefit to Mr. Hall's character; while, by the divine blessing upon his labours, it had transformed a society that was rapidly sinking under the influence of cold, or disputatious, speculators, into a flourishing church and congregation, "bringing forth the fruits of righteousness," and shining in the lustre of a consistent christian profession. It is pleasing to remark that the attachment on both sides remained undiminished until Mr. Hall's death.

On recovering from this attack, he received a letter from his old friend Sir James Mackintosh, then Recorder of Bombay, which was written soon after Sir James had heard of his first indisposition. It is highly interesting, both as a memorial of genuine friendship, and as a beautiful exhibition of elevated and delicate sentiment. My insertion of it will not, however, be regarded as a proof that I entirely adopt the *theory* which the writer so elegantly sketched.

Bombay, Sept. 21st, 1805.

"My Dear Hall,

"I believe that, in the hurry of leaving England, I did "not answer the letter which you wrote to me in December, "1803. I did not, however, forget your interesting young "friend,* from whom I have had one letter from Constan-

* This "interesting young friend," was the celebrated *Claudius James Rich*, to whose valuable researches in Babylon, Koordistan, &c., the world is so much indebted. He was born in March 1787, at Dijon, in France, but was taken, while yet an infant, to Bristol. At 15 years of age his extraordinary attainments in Hebrew, Syriac, Persian, Arabic, and other eastern languages, attracted the attention of Mr. Hall, Sir Charles Williams, and other eminent men. He married Sir James Mackintosh's eldest daughter, and shortly afterwards took up his abode at Bagdad, as British Resident. His industry and research were quite extraordinary. His MSS. are probably the most extensive

"tinople, and to whom I have twice written at Cairo, where "he now is. No request of *yours* could, indeed, be lightly "esteemed by me.

"It happened to me a few days ago, in drawing up "(merely for my own use) a short sketch of my life, that I "had occasion to give a faithful statement of my recollec- "tion of the circumstances of my first acquaintance with "you. On the most impartial survey of my early life, I "could see nothing which tended so much to excite and "invigorate my understanding, and to direct it towards "high, though, perhaps, scarcely accessible objects, as my "intimacy with you. Five-and-twenty years are now past "since we first met; yet hardly any thing has occurred "since, which has left a deeper or more agreeable impres- "sion on my mind. I now remember the extraordinary "union of brilliant fancy with acute intellect which would "have excited more admiration than it has done, if it had "been dedicated to the amusement of the great and the "learned, instead of being consecrated to the far more noble "office of consoling, instructing, and reforming the poor and "the forgotten.

"It was then too early for me to discover that extreme "purity, which in a mind pre-occupied with the low reali- "ties of life, would have been no natural companion of so "much activity and ardour, but which thoroughly detached "you from the world, and made you the inhabitant of re- "gions where alone it is possible to be always active with- "out impurity, and where the ardour of your sensibility had "unbounded scope amidst the inexhaustible combinations "of beauty and excellence.

"It is not given to us to preserve an exact medium. "Nothing is so difficult as to decide how much ideal models "ought to be combined with experience; how much of the "future should be let into the present, in the progress of "the human mind. To ennoble and purify, without raising "us above the sphere of our usefulness; to qualify us for "what we ought to seek, without unfitting us for that to "which we must submit; are great and difficult problems, "which can be but imperfectly solved.

"It is certain the child may be too manly, not only for "his present enjoyments, but for his future prospects. Per- "haps, my good friend, you have fallen into this error of

and valuable ever brought together by any private person in the East; and his collection of coins, gems, and precious stones was very rich. He died of cholera at Shiraz, October 5, 1820.

" superior natures. From this error has, I think, arisen that
" calamity with which it has pleased Providence to visit
" you; which, to a mind less fortified by reason and reli-
" gion, I should not dare to mention, but which I really
" consider in you as little more than the indignant struggles
" of a pure mind with the low realities which surround it,—
' the fervent aspirations after regions more congenial to it
' —and a momentary blindness, produced by the fixed con-
" templations of objects too bright for human vision. I may
" say, in this case, in a far grander sense than that in which
" the words were originally spoken by our great poet,

——————————' And yet
' The light which led astray was light from heaven.'

" On your return to us, you must surely have found con-
" solation in the only terrestrial produce which is pure and
" truly exquisite; in the affections and attachments you
" have inspired, which you were most worthy to inspire,
" and which no human pollution can rob of their heavenly
" nature. If I were to prosecute the reflections, and in-
" dulge the feelings, which at this moment fill my mind, I
" should soon venture to doubt, whether, for a calamity de-
" rived from such a source, and attended with such consola-
" tion, I should so far yield to the views and opinions of
" men, as to seek to condole with you. But I check my-
" self, and I exhort you, my most worthy friend, to check
" your best propensities, for the sake of attaining their ob-
" ject. You cannot live *for* men without living *with* them.
" Serve God, then, by the active service of men. Contem-
" plate more the good you *can* do than the evil you can
" only lament. Allow yourself to see the loveliness of virtue
" amidst all its imperfections; and employ your moral ima-
" gination, not so much by bringing it into contrast with the
" model of ideal perfection, as in gently blending some of
" the fainter colours of the latter with the brighter hues of
" real experienced excellence; thus heightening their beauty,
" instead of broadening the shade which must surround us
" till we awake from this dream in other spheres of exis-
" tence.

" My habits of life have not been favourable to this train
" of meditation. I have been too busy or too trifling. My
" nature perhaps would have been better consulted if I had
" been placed in a *quieter* station, where speculation might
" have been my business, and visions of the fair and good

' my chief recreation. When I approach you, I feel a power-
" ful attraction towards this which seems the natural des-
" tiny of my mind; but habit opposes obstacles, and duty
" calls me off, and reason frowns on him who wastes that
" reflection on a destiny independent of him, which he ought
" to reserve for actions of which he is the master.

" In another letter I may write to you on miscellaneous
" subjects; at present I cannot bring my mind to speak of
" them. Let me hear from you soon and often.

' Farewell, my dear friend:

" Yours ever most faithfully,

" James Mackintosh."

Two visitations of so humiliating a calamity within the compass of a year deeply affected Mr. Hall's mind. Happily, however, for himself and for the world, his spirits soon recovered their wonted tone; and the permanent impression on his character was exclusively religious. His own decided persuasion was that, however vivid his convictions of religious truth, and of the necessity of a consistent course of evangelical obedience had formerly been, and however correct his doctrinal sentiments during the last four or five years, yet that he did not undergo a thorough transformation of character, a complete renewal of his heart and affections, until the first of these seizures. Some of his Cambridge friends, who visited him at Shelford, previously to his removal to Dr. Arnold's, and witnessed his deep prostration of soul while he read the fifty-first psalm, and made each verse the subject of penitent confession and of a distinct prayer, were rather inclined to concur with him as to the correctness of the opinion. Be this, however, as it may (and the wonderful revelations of " the great day" can alone remove the doubt), there can be no question that from this period he seemed more to live under the prevailing recollection of his entire dependence upon God, that his habits were more devotional than they had ever before been, his spiritual exercises more fervent and more elevated.

In a letter written to his friend Mr. Phillips, of Clapham, after his recovery, he thus adverts to his afflictions:

" I cannot look back upon the events which have befallen " me, without admiration and gratitude. I am a monument " of the goodness and of the severity of God. My sufferings " have been extreme, and the kindness of God, in interposing " in my behalf, unspeakable. Pray for me, my dear friend, " that I may retain an indelible sense of the mercies received, " and that the inconceivable afflictions I have undergone " may work for me the peaceable fruits of righteousness. " I am often afraid lest it should be with me as with the " ancient Israelites, who, after they had sung the praises of " God, ' soon forgot his works.' O ! that a life so signally " redeemed from destruction, may be as signally employed " in that which is alone the true end of life, the service of " God. But my heart is ' like a deceitful bow,' continually " prone to turn aside ; so that nothing but the powerful im- " pulse of divine grace can fix it in a right aim."

At this time, I believe, Mr. Hall, under the persuasion to which I have just alluded, made a solemn dedication of himself to God, renewing the act annually on the recurrence of his birth-day. One of these touching and impressive records, which has been found among his papers, will, I feel assured, be read with deep interest.

" An Act of solemn Dedication of myself to God.

" O Lord, thou that searchest the heart and triest the " reins of the children of men, be thou the witness of " what I am now about, in the strength of thy grace, to " attempt : that grace I humbly and earnestly implore, " to give validity and effect to that act of solemn engage- " ment of myself to thy service, on which I am about to " enter. ' Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins " are none of them hid from thee.' ' I was born in sin, " and in iniquity did my mother conceive me.' I am an " apostate, guilty branch of an apostate guilty root, and " my life has been a series of rebellions and transgres- " sions, in which I have walked according to the course " of this world ; according to the Prince of the power of " the air, the ' *spirit that now worketh in the children of* " *disobedience.*' How shall I confess my transgressions " before thee ; what numbers can reach ; what words

" can adequately express them ! ' *My iniquities have* " *increased over my head, and my transgressions have* " *grown up unto Heaven.*' O Lord, I esteem it a won " derful mercy that I have not long since been cut off in " the midst of my sins, and been sent to hell before I " had an opportunity or a heart to repent. Being as- " sured from the word of God of thy gracious and mer- " ciful nature, and of thy willingness to pardon and " accept penitent believing sinners on the ground of the " blood and righteousness of thine own adorable Son, " ' who died, the just for the unjust, to bring them to " God,' and that ' him that cometh to him he will in no- " wise cast out,' I do most humbly prostrate myself at " the footstool of his cross, and through him enter into " thy covenant. I disclaim all right to myself from " henceforth, to my soul, my body, my time, my health, " my reputation, my talents, or any thing that belongs " to me. I confess myself to be the property of the " glorious Redeemer, as one whom I humbly hope he " has redeemed by his blood to be part of ' the first " fruits of his creatures.'

" I do most cheerfully and cordially receive him in all " his offices, as my Priest, my Prophet, and my King. " I dedicate myself to him, to serve, love, and trust in " him as my life and my salvation to my life's end.

" I renounce the Devil and all his works, the flesh, " and the world, with heartfelt regret that I should have been enslaved by them so long. I do solemnly and " deliberately take thee to be my full and satisfying " good, and eternal portion, in and through thine ador- " able Son the Redeemer, and by the assistance of the " blessed Spirit of all grace, the third person in the " triune God, whom I take to be my Sanctifier and " Comforter to the end of time, and through a happy " eternity ; praying that the Holy Spirit may deign to " take perpetual possession of my heart, and fix his abode " there.

" I do most solemnly devote and give up myself to the " Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, agreeably to the " terms of the Gospel covenant, and in humble expecta-

" tion of the blessings it ascertains to sincere believers.
" I call thee to witness, O God! the truth and reality of
" this surrender of all I have, and all I am, to thee; and,
" conscious of the unspeakable deceitfulness of my heart,
" I humbly and earnestly implore the influence of thy
" Spirit to enable me to stand stedfast in this covenant,
" as well as an interest in the blood of thy Son, that I
" may be forgiven in those instances (alas! that such an
" idea should be possible,) in which I may, in any de-
" gree, swerve from it.

" Done this [2d] day of May, 1809, seven o'clock in
" the evening, Leicester.

" ROBERT HALL."

Mr. Hall, on his removal from Dr. Cox's, spent some months among his relatives and friends in Leicestershire. At Arnsby he retraced the scenes of his youth, often visited the grave-yard, which would naturally awaken many interesting recollections of his early life, and on these occasions he has more than once been seen kneeling at his father's grave engaged in earnest prayer. He afterwards resided, for a time, at Enderby, a pleasant and sequestered village, five miles from Leicester, where, by the united influence of calm retirement and gentle spontaneous occupation, he gradually regained his bodily health, with great mental tranquillity, and a renewed capacity for usefulness in the church.

His friends, Dr. Ryland and Mr. Fuller, persuaded of the benefits that would flow from drawing his attention to a specific object, requested him to investigate the critical peculiarities of some difficult texts in the New Testament, respecting which Dr. Marshman had asked the opinion of his friends in England. This judicious application directed his thoughts to some of his old and favourite inquiries, and produced the most salutary effects.*

* For more than two years he employed much time in a critical examination of the New Testament, and in making and arranging such corrected translations as he deemed important, with short reasons for his deviating from the authorized version; intending to publish the whole in a pamphlet of about one hundred pages. Just as he had finished this work, he, for the first time, saw Macknight's new transla-

From this he passed to other literary occupations, (which he resumed with all the ardour and freshness of rejuveniscence) thence to closer biblical study, and, in due time, when his strength and self-possession were so restored as to permit the exertion without injury, he returned to the delightful work of " proclaiming the good tidings of peace." He was thus enabled to give ample evidence that " the splendour of his mind was wholly unimpaired; but, that, instead of bursting forth so frequently as before, like the lightning flash, it glowed with a mild and sober radiance, and gradually diffused around it the serenity of that peace which passeth understanding."

He first preached in some of the villages around him; and then, occasionally, to a small congregation assembling at a chapel in Harvey Lane, Leicester, which had several years before been under the care of that eminent man, Dr. Carey, of Serampore. The congregation had been diminishing for some years, and at this time did not exceed two hundred and fifty; the church consisted of seventy-six members. After having preached to them a few months, he accepted an invitation to become their stated pastor; and his ministerial labours were soon followed by tokens of good. " The people," said he, in a letter to Dr. Ryland, " are a simple-hearted, affectionate,
" praying people, to whom I preach with more pleasure
" than to the more refined audience at Cambridge. We
" have had, through mercy, some small addition and
" hope for more. Our meetings in general, our prayer
" meetings in particular, are well attended."

tion of the Apostolic Epistles; and finding himself anticipated in some of the corrections which he thought most valuable, destroyed his manuscript. This I much regret, for in such of these notes as he read to me, he seemed, though often merely by slight changes in the version, suggested by a careful comparison of the synonyms in the Greek, to have thrown great light upon the sacred text.

His pursuits at this time rendering it desirable that he should possess copies of Walton's Polyglott, and of various other expensive works in different departments of biblical research, they were procured and sent to him by his relative and friend, the late Mr. Button, of Paternoster Row, with the assurance that he would not be expected to pay for them, until an improvement in his pecuniary circumstances made it perfectly convenient.

With this church he continued connected nearly twenty years. The church and congregation steadily increased during that long interval, and scarcely any thing of moment occurred to interrupt their internal peace. The place of worship, which, when Mr. Hall first settled there, would not conveniently hold four hundred persons, was enlarged in 1809 for the reception of about eight hundred; and in 1817 a second enlargement rendered it capable of accommodating a thousand persons. In 1826, at the close of Mr. Hall's labours there, the place was comfortably filled, and the members of the church, besides the members of the mixt-communion church, hereafter mentioned, and those who it is believed had gone to their eternal reward, amounted to nearly three hundred; of whom about two hundred and fifty had been baptized by Mr. Hall. More than a hundred of those who constituted the evening congregation were pious members of the church of England; and some of the neighbouring clergy frequently attended.*

* There are those who are so exclusively attached to their own ceremonial, its adjuncts and results, as to think that churchmen should conscientiously avoid entering a dissenting place of worship, and that it is especially censurable for a *clergyman* "to indulge even a casual temptation," though for the purpose of hearing the most eminent and excellent men. (See *Christian Observer*, Feb. 1833, p. 101.) I have also met with a very few individuals who have condemned Mr. Hall, for frequently listening to the pulpit instructions of Mr. Simeon, when he resided at Cambridge, and of Mr. Robinson, after he removed to Leicester. Persons with souls of this very slender calibre, with regard to genuine liberality of sentiment, have for some years been rapidly diminishing amongst the well-informed classes of pious men; and are still, I hope, decreasing, notwithstanding the violent collisions in the Christian world. Where the intellectual contraction is not so constitutionally fixed that cure is hopeless, I would venture to recommend serious meditation upon the two following passages from the writings of the elevated and noble-minded *John Howe*.

"You ought most frequently to attend on that which you find to be "most edifying to your own soul: as that should be your more ordinary "diet that best agrees with you. And that way, therefore, you must "most constantly adhere to, which is most grateful and savoury to you, "because you cannot so much edify by what you less relish. But your "judgement and latitude may well allow you *sometimes* to frequent "the assemblies with which you hold not constant communion. And "if so, it will also direct you thereto for a valuable end; as that you "may signify you ordinarily decline them, not as *no Christians*, or "their worship as *no worship;* but as more defective or less edifying; "and that you may maintain love, and both express and beget a dispo-"sition to nearer union. For which, and all things that tend to make "us a happier people, *we must wait upon Him in whose hands are the* "*hearts of all men*."—Humble Request to Conformists and Nonconformists.

"This may occasion some idle people to cry out, 'What! at church "in the forenoon, and at meeting house in the afternoon? This is "fine! What will now become of our religion?' And what is already "become of his religion who so exclaims? Do the religion of the "church and of the [orthodox] meeting-house make two religions? "Wherein do they differ? The substance of the same religion is com-"mon to them both. Therefore the *modes and accidents* wherein "only they differ, are this man's religion. And can any man be the "better for such a religion, that consists of modes and accidents? 'Tis "true, that religion may possibly be so ludicrously disguised and mis-"represented, as scarcely to be fitly owned for any religion at all. But "this cannot be said of most of the congregations of England, of either "sect. And they that have any thing of charity, or the fear of God, "about them, will be very wary how, for a misplaced word, or in-"decent action, or expression, they censure one or another of these "two sorts of solemn worshipping assemblies, as having nothing of God, "or of true religion among them."—*Considerations, &c., relating to Occasional Conformity.*

The spirit of this admirable writer, with regard to the more intimate association of protestants of different persuasions, seems to be far better comprehended and manifested in the American States, than by the writer whose cautionary remarks have occasioned this note; such, at least, appears a fair inference from the following facts.

"During my residence in the United States, I was frequently wit-"ness to the good understanding which generally, though, doubtless, "not universally, prevails among clergymen professing different opinions "on church forms, &c.....The two following I have preserved:— "The corner-stone of a new Baptist church was laid at Savannah in "Georgia, and the ceremonial services were performed by the clergy-"men of the Methodist, German, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, "and Baptist churches.....The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was "administered in the Rev. Mr. Past's church (Presbyterian church at "Washington), and, *as usual*, all members of other churches in re-"gular standing, were invited to unite with the members of that church, "in testifying their faith in, and love to, their Lord and Saviour. The "invited guests assembled round the table; and it so happened, that "Mr. Grundy, a senator from Tenessee, and two Cherokee Indians, "were seated side by side."—*Stuart's Three Years in North America*, Vol. I. p. 130.

In March 1808, during Mr. Hall's residence at Enderby, his marriage, which had been in contemplation nearly twelve months, took place. This event gave great and sincere satisfaction to his old and intimate friends, most of whom had long regretted that one so evidently

formed for domestic enjoyments, should for so many years have lived without attaining them; and had no doubt, indeed, that an earlier marriage would, by checking his propensity to incessant retirement and mental abstraction, have preserved him from the heavy afflictions which had befallen him. As Mrs. Hall still lives to mourn the loss of her incomparable husband, I must not permit myself more than to testify how highly he estimated her kindness and affection, and how often, in his conversation, as well as in his letters, he expressed his gratitude to God for giving him so pious, prudent, and devoted a wife.* Of their five children, three daughters and one son survived. Another son died in 1814.† A few months after his marriage he removed to Leicester, the gradual increase in the number of his congregation, rendering it desirable that he should dwell amongst them, and associate with them as their pastor.

Mr. Hall's residence at Leicester was not only of longer continuance than at any other place, but I doubt not that it was the period in which he was the most happy, active, and useful. His domestic comfort at once contributed to a more uniform flow of spirits than he had for some time experienced, and greatly to the regularity of his habits. The increase both of attentive hearers, and of the number among them who were admitted to church-fellowship, supplied constant reason for encouragement and thankfulness. He was also within the reach of ministers and others, of different persuasions, men of decided piety, and some of them of considerable attainments, who knew how to appreciate the extraordinary advantages of frequent intercourse with such an individual; thus yielding him the delight of an inter-

* The late Mr. Morris, in that section of his "Biographical Recollections" which relates to this period, has, for want of correct information, fallen into great inaccuracies on some essential points. Yet, as the detail of facts can only be given by a total disregard of the feelings of survivors, it may suffice, if I affirm, from an acquaintance with circumstances and motives (at this period) more intimate than that of any other individual, that Mr. Hall, with reference to his marriage, proceeded in a manner fully consistent with the sentiments of honour, refinement, and delicacy, which uniformly characterised his conduct.

† See his letter to Mr. Phillips, No. 40 in this volume.

change of soul and sentiment, besides that fruit of friendship so aptly characterized by Lord Bacon:—"Whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another—he tosseth his thoughts more easily—he marshalleth them more orderly—he seeth how they look when they are turned into words—and he waxeth wiser than himself; often more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation."*

Leicester, from its situation in the heart of the midland counties, as well as from its importance in a leading inland manufacture, was the centre of influence and operation to a considerable distance around; and the concurrence of many favourable circumstances had rendered it the centre also of a religious influence, and of religious operations, diffusing themselves incessantly with a new and growing impulse. To this the zeal and activity of the late Rev. Thomas Robinson, of Leicester, and of Mr. Hall's father, had greatly contributed; and many clergymen and dissenting ministers in Leicestershire and the neighbouring counties, were in their respective fields of labour, instrumental in producing the most cheering and successful results. The attention of the Christian world had been recently invited, or, I might perhaps say, *summoned*, to promote the noble objects of Missionary Societies, Bible Societies, Sunday and other Schools for the instruction of the poor; and the summons had been obeyed in a universality and cordiality of vigorous Christian effort, and in a spirit of conciliation and harmony, such as the world had not yet known. Placed in the

* Mr. Hall, however, from the midway position of Leicester between London and the large towns in Lancashire and Yorkshire, was much exposed to interruptions. (See Letter, No. 77.) Many persons who had but a slight acquaintance with him, would invariably spend a day at Leicester, in their way from London to Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, &c., or from either of those places to London, that they might, during the greater part of it, enjoy his society; and, though he often found this to be a real annoyance, yet such was his feeling of what was due to strangers in point of courtesy, that it was not until he had sustained the inconvenience for almost twenty years, that he would consent that this class of visitors should be informed that he would not be at leisure to see them until evening.

midst of so extensive a sphere of benevolent and sacred influence, Mr. Hall was soon roused to a measure of activity and a diversity of employment to which he had hitherto been a stranger. The Bible Society at Leicester, Missionary Societies there and all around, asked and received his aid; and these, with the different public services of frequent occurrence among orthodox dissenters, gave occasion to the happiest exercise of his varied powers.

His religious character thus became correctly estimated by a much larger portion of the community. Instead of being known chiefly to men of reading and taste, as an author who had appeared before the world on a few momentous occasions, and, after a striking exhibition of intellectual and moral energy, had hastened back to his retirement, he now became much more known and revered as the correct and eloquent interpreter of the Christian faith, the intrepid asserter of its infinite superiority to all human systems of philosophy or morals. Long had he been admired by the intelligent as a great man; the circumstances in which he now moved with so much philanthropic ardour, caused him to be regarded, not merely by these, but by pious men of every persuasion, as a good man, rejoicing to consecrate his best faculties to the specific objects of the Christian ministry, and such purposes of enlarged exertion as were fully compatible with his holy calling.

Nor were these efforts, and this high estimate of their value, confined to the field of activity he thus occupied. He had, on quitting Bristol, in 1791, consented to spend a few weeks with his friends there, every two years. He had, also made a similar arrangement for visiting Cambridge, where the members of his former congregation had peculiar claims upon him. Although his invariable dread of notoriety, and his dislike of the bustle of the metropolis, caused his visits there to be "few and far between,"* yet they occurred sufficiently often to excite

* In 1812, several of Mr. Hall's old and valued friends, in conjunction with some men of rank and influence, who said "Mr. Hall must be sought out and brought out," laid a plan for his permanent settlemen

almost universally the highest admiration of his singular qualities as a preacher, and to convince many who previously had contemplated the evangelical system of religion with great disrelish, that it was the *only* foundation of elevated morality, and that its cordial adoption was not necessarily repugnant to genius, learning, and intellectual cultivation.

Wherever he went, he was called to address overflowing congregations, and commonly of a remarkably mixed character. Churchmen and dissenters; men of rank and influence; individuals in lower stations; men of simple piety, and others of deep theological knowledge; men who admired Christianity as a beautiful system, and those who received it into the heart by faith; men in doubt, others involved in unbelief:—all resorted to the place where he was announced as the preacher. Frequently he was apprised of this peculiarity in the structure of his auditory, and, whenever that was the case, the striking appropriation of the sermons to the assembly was always manifest. Of this the reader will have ample evidence in the sermons inserted in the sixth volume of his Works, many of which were delivered on public occasions.*

Mr. Hall's writings during his residence at Leicester,

in London. The first step in the execution of this plan, his invitation to deliver a series of lectures in the metropolis, failed, partly in consequence of his ill health, and partly through his reluctance to appear in a prominent situation. See the letters 32, 33, 34.

* That the reader may not suspect I over-rate the impression made by Mr. Hall upon those who were not his intimates, nor had fully adopted his scheme of theology, I insert with others in Appendix, Note C, the late Mr. John Scott's elegant and discriminating sketch of his powers as a preacher and writer.

While this sheet was going through the press, I accidentally found among some old letters, one from a friend residing in France, in which there was the following allusion to Mr. Hall, by a French protestant clergyman, who was visiting Bristol in Sept. 1822. In a letter addressed to another protestant minister, Mr. Kerpezdron, of Aulnay, he says,

"I heard Mr. Robert Hall, of Leicester, last Tuesday morning; but "his sermon was so great, so good, so eloquent, so simple, so pious, in "a word, so complete a piece of pulpit oratory, that I cannot tell you "anything about it, except that it has made an indelible impression on "my mind. I thought when I came out, that I never could preach "again."

though by no means numerous, tended greatly to augment his influence upon society.

The first of these was published anonymously in the Eclectic Review, but left no room for hesitation as to its author. It was a critique upon a pamphlet entitled "Zeal without Innovation," which he undertook at the earnest entreaty of the late Mr. Robinson of Leicester, "who in common with all the serious clergy in those parts, disapproved the pamphlet highly."* As it is no part of my intention to present elaborate accounts of Mr. Hall's successive publications, it may suffice for me to remark, with regard to this critique, that while it places the controversy between the puritans and their opponents in a flood of light, and exhibits the essential importance of religious liberty to the growth, if not in some cases, to the existence, of genuine, devotional Christianity; it presents a more admirable picture of the character of the Evangelical Clergy,† a more powerful, liberal, and successful defence of their object and conduct, than has been, as yet, exhibited by any other person. Many regard it as among the most instructive and useful, as well as among the most masterly, of Mr. Hall's productions. It abounds in keen satire, in that dignified invective in which he so remarkably excelled, in irrefragable argument, in touching description, in tasteful imagery, in vehement and powerful appeals, and in sentiments of a weight and worth only to be fully estimated by men whose minds are elevated above the prejudices which tie us down to sects and parties, and can rejoice at the extension of true religion, among persons of any persuasion, or through the instrumentality of whomsoever the Great Head of the Church may employ. The value set by the public upon this disquisition, was evinced in the rapid sale of three editions, in a separate pamphlet, independently of its circulation in the Review.

Of the sermons published by Mr. Hall during his residence at Leicester, the first was preached in behalf of

* See letter 23.

† I use this term to avoid a periphrasis, and because it is intelligible and strictly characteristic.

the Sunday School connected with his own congregation, and appeared under the title of "The Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes." The subject is not so adapted as many others to the decorations of eloquence; for the deplorable effects of ignorance and the blessings of knowledge are perhaps best exhibited in the detail of facts which scarcely admit of embellishment. Yet Mr. Hall's desire to enlarge the capacity for enjoyment among the lower classes, as well as to promote their highest welfare, tempted him to enter this region of common-places, and thus gave a fresh opportunity of showing how an original thinker can communicate an air of freshness to a worn-out topic, bring up to the surface arguments and illustrations that lie far below the reach of ordinary reasoners, and enforce them with a warmth and energy calculated equally to impress and to convince.*

The two next sermons are of a much higher order. One of them, on "The Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister," was addressed to the Rev. James Robertson, on his ordination over the Independent Church at Stretton, Warwickshire; the other, which portrays the duties, discouragements, and supports "of the Christian Missionary," was addressed to the Rev. Eustace Carey, on his designation as a missionary to India. In these the author traces with a master hand the various sources of discouragement and consolation, which appertain to the respective offices of the minister and the missionary. Like one intimately acquainted with comparative anatomy, he exhibits the points of

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agreement, as well as those of diversity in the different subjects, with the most convincing discrimination; while conversant, as well with the morbid as the healthy anatomy of the subjects before him, he explores to its inmost recess, that universal moral disease which calls forth the efforts of both ministers and missionaries, and then (where the analogy must drop) he reveals the principles and the origin of an infallible cure. Both these addresses are remarkable for their originality and variety; every topic successively advanced is irradiated with eloquence, and glows with feeling; and so skilfully are both the discourses conducted, that, while they are avowedly directed to the minister and the missionary, and abound in the most valuable instructions to them respectively, the private Christian, who reads with devout attention, may derive from them as rich instruction for himself and as many directions for his own religious improvement, as though they were specifically addressed to him alone. This, indeed, was a decided characteristic of Mr. Hall's sermons. He who heard, or he who read, would find his astonishment and admiration strongly excited; but often, if not always, the more his emotion was enkindled by the preacher, the more forcibly was he compelled to retire into himself, and examine his own heart.

The sudden and untimely death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, was an event calculated to make the deepest impression upon a mind constituted like Mr. Hall's. The illustrious rank of the victim, her youth and recent marriage, the affecting nature of the catastrophe, its probable influence upon the reigning prince, upon the succession to the throne, and the welfare of the nation even to distant ages; all presented themselves to his thoughts with the most heart-stirring energy. He preached three sermons on the occasion, of which many of the auditors affirm, the one published was by no means the best. It, however, by universal acknowledgement, bore the palm above all the numerous valuable sermons that were then published. Stately, ornate, and solemn, it most strikingly accords with the event which called it forth. It embraces the various topics that would

occur to a man of piety, feeling, and excursive thought, on the contemplation of such an event,—the mysteriousness of God's providence, the vicissitudes of empires, the aggravated poignancy of sudden calamity to individuals of elevated station, "the uncertainty of life, the frailty "of youth, the evanescence of beauty, the nothingness of "worldly greatness," the blindness of man to futurity, "the human race itself withering" away, and the perpetuity of God's promises as the great and noble contrast to universal fragility;—these are touched in succession with the utmost tenderness, beauty, and sublimity. In felicity of diction, in delicacy and pathos, in the rich variety of most exquisite and instructive trains of thought, in their cogent application to truths of the utmost moment, in the skilful combination of what in eloquence, philosophy, and religion, was best calculated to make a permanent and salutary impression, this sermon probably stands unrivalled.

I have alluded thus concisely to a few of the sermons published by Mr. Hall while he was at Leicester, (and may also refer to most of those that are inserted in these Works) with a view of inviting the reader to consider what may be the probable influence of such a man in raising the standard of preaching in England; and to inquire next, whether it is not necessary that the standard should be raised, that ministers of every persuasion may be ready to meet the exigencies of the times in which we are thrown. I am well aware that some still remain among us who regard every thing beyond the common places and technicalities of theology, as a departure from "the simplicity that is in Christ;" and seem to apprehend even the truths of the gospel in danger, if he who advances them from the pulpit does not suppress all manifestations of intellectual greatness or cultivated taste.

Yet, assuredly, the Apostle Paul, though speaking and writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, did not hesitate to reason with extraordinary profundity and acumen, to embellish his compositions with quotations which proved his reading, and to excite emotion, in those

whom he addressed, by the most exquisite touches of tenderness and pathos. Both his epistles and oral addresses exhibit as remarkable as appropriate a variety in the manner of discussion and of application; and neither of them are ever dull, formal, or systematic.

Let me not be misunderstood to recommend any compromise with men of the world, by a partial concealment of the truth. Nor let me be supposed to doubt that the simplest exhibition of Christ as "the Saviour of sinners" from the guilt and thraldom of sin, has, during the whole previous history of the Christian dispensation, brought many "from the power of Satan unto God." Far from daring to question this, I delight in acknowledging it; and I rejoice that it has pleased God in such a multitude of instances, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Yet, if I mistake not, we are living in a state of the church and of the world, in which the truth, to be defended efficaciously, must be defended by persons of deep thinking, of extensive knowledge, of sound discrimination, of warm and active spirits richly endowed with grace and wisdom from on high. Even political discussions, and the business of the legislature, become often so intimately blended with the concerns of religion, and so often involve the rights of men who make a profession of piety under different modifications, that upright legislators, to discharge their duty conscientiously, *must* investigate many important theological questions, to which their attention may have been hitherto scarcely ever called. In other directions, too, the current has evidently set in, and men of elevated intellect, and men of exalted station, as well as others, whether they wish it, or wish to escape it, will feel themselves compelled to decide either to "kiss the Son" while he is offered to them, or to reject him once for all, and suffer the wonderful machinery of God's eternal purposes to pursue its course and leave them for ever behind.

Is it quite consistent with the arrangements of ineffable wisdom and mercy, that the souls of such men shall never be touched by appropriate instruments, and that the repulsiveness of the gospel to the natural mind,

should, of necessity, be augmented by the incompetency of its ministers to engage attention?

The time too, if I mistake not again, has arrived when christianity receives more serious injury from its friends than from its enemies, at least, in this country. The active, restless mind of man, ever seeking after something new, falls into the temptation, with regard to religion, of being "wise beyond what is written." Hence, the world is required to receive forced interpretations of scripture, absurd and untenable dogmas, hasty and sweeping inferences from the most obscure passages; that is made most prominent of which scripture says the least, and the analogy of faith is perpetually violated. All this is done with an air of authority, and in a tone of discovery: some of the propounders of these crudities demand for them a cordial reception as a test for scriptural faith, and too often evince in their promulgation a spirit of intolerance, to which the protestant world has long been a stranger, and which, if pursued to its natural issue, would either sever the church into a number of infinitesimal sections, idly brandishing their weapons at each other, and of no force against the common enemy, or would reduce the exercise of private judgement to a nullity.

To prevent the farther growth of these monstrous evils, there must be brought into existence and operation, the clear results of discriminating research as to the essential truths in a system of reconciliation and restoration to the Divine image; they must be placed in a strong relief, so as to be at once distinguishable from fanciful speculation and from bold innovation, as well as to check the propensity to overstatement, which is the constant symbol of a raw theology. For these the wise and thoughtful look to an augmentation, among ministers of the gospel, of men "thoroughly furnished," by endowments human and divine; and I have an entire persuasion, that in infinite mercy, such will be vouchsafed to the world, and each rightly placed, and efficiently employed, in that mighty transformation which shall make "the wilderness blossom as the rose." But I must not dwell longer upon this subject.

Mr. Hall's known approbation of Sunday schools, and the excellency of his judgement as to matters of detail, when he gave his mind thoroughly to them, led to his often being consulted on points of difficulty. His sentiments on one of these points richly deserve general attention. A neighbouring clergyman,* having been urged to allow that the art of writing should be taught in his parish Sunday school, intreated Mr. Hall to give him his deliberate judgement on the question. This, in a short time, he returned in the following terms.

"INEXPEDIENCY OF TEACHING TO WRITE IN SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

"In considering this question, the obligation of a religious observance of the Lord's day must be assumed, as it is a principle not disputed among the parties whom this discussion concerns. I know not how a religious observance of the Lord's day can be defined but by saying, It is an exemption of it from every employment not strictly religious, works of the last necessity and mercy excepted.

"Now *writing*, it is undeniable, is not a religious employment, nor can learning to write be so denominated. It seems, therefore, to be excluded by the definition we have laid down. It is altogether a *secular* employment, which may occasionally be made subservient to the purposes of piety, as may every other attainment; but it partakes not of the nature of religion.

"Once break down the barrier between the sacred and civil employment of time, and the sanctity of the sabbath is violated; nor is it possible to know where to stop. A principle is broken in upon which is plain and determinable; nor will it be possible to assign any consistent reason for resisting a second or third encroachment, which will not equally prohibit the first. If the qualifying of persons for civil departments be alleged, other branches of knowledge, arithmetic for example, must be introduced; for there are abundance of situations where the

* The Rev. Edward Morgan, Vicar of Syston.

art of computation would not be less useful than that of writing. Thus Sunday-schools would become schools of general instruction, and the sanctification of the sabbath be completely lost sight of.

"When young persons have been sanctioned by their superiors in devoting a part of the sabbath to exercises of a purely secular nature, what shall restrain the more studious part of them, at a subsequent period, from pursuing grammar, geography, or arithmetic, on the Lord's day, which are as much connected with religion as the acquisition pleaded for? and when we recollect the tenacity of early impressions, and the tendency of depraved nature to a progressive deviation from rectitude, these and much greater evils may be expected to ensue.

"The relaxation of the rule contended for in the present instance, will naturally destroy in youthful minds a reverence for the sabbath; and thus one of the elements of impiety will be imbibed in a seminary established for religious instruction. The rules of duty are never successfully inculcated on children except in an absolute form; the limitations and occasional exceptions to which they are liable, are best left to be learned by subsequent experience and inquiry. Children are utterly incapable of comprehending nice and subtle distinctions; and a very refined one indeed is necessary to ascertain the difference in a moral view, betwixt teaching the art of writing and other branches of knowledge.

"I am aware of but one objection to which this reasoning is liable. It may be said that learning to read is no more a part of religion, than learning to write. But here lies an important difference. Though reading is not, in itself considered, a part of religion, it is a necessary instrument of religion. The word of God is not accessible without it. It is unquestionably the will of the Supreme Being that the sacred oracles should be perused, or they need not to have been imparted; but they cannot be perused by such as are ignorant of the art of reading; and the ordination of the end is always supposed to include the appointment of what is absolutely necessary to that end. Writing *may be* rendered subservient to

the promotion of piety; but it possesses this property only in common with every other acquisition. Reading *is essential* to any considerable acquaintance with the oracles of God. It is the key that unlocks the treasures of inspiration.

"All pious persons would be shocked to read an advertisement from a writing master, informing the public that his seminary would be open on the Lord's day. But surely the circumstance of his receiving a pecuniary recompence for his labour, creates no material difference in the two cases. He does that for reward which the persons I am opposing do gratuitously: but what it is wrong to do under the stimulus of a recompence, cannot become right in consequence of its being done voluntarily and spontaneously. If the action in question be right, it carries its own vindication with it, on both suppositions; if it be wrong, the criminality of it is always supposed to be palliated, rather than aggravated by the strength of the motive. It is sufficient to decide the question with those who suppose the fourth commandment to be still in force, to recollect that God has said, 'Thou shalt remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.'*

"R. H."

Besides the various sermons and reviews which Mr. Hall wrote and published, during his residence at Leicester, he composed for circulation among the associated Baptist churches in the counties of Northampton, Leicester, and Warwick, two tracts on the Work of the Holy Spirit, and on Hearing the Word; both deeply imbued with simple evangelical truth, and rich in excellent practical remarks, fitted for the beneficial perusal of all classes. There were also other compositions which he executed with singular felicity. I mean, his biographical sketches. They are, except the rapid but exquisite sketches of Brainerd, Fletcher of Madeley, and

* In his shorter letter on the same subject, inserted in the Christian Guardian for August, 1816, he says, "In the Sunday-school belonging to Harvey Lane, a certain portion of the scholars are taught writing on a week-day evening."

Henry Martyn, the delineations *of a friend;* and, perhaps, in a few particulars, need a slight allowance for the high colouring to which the warmth of friendship tempts us when meditating upon departed excellence; yet they are, on the whole, exact in the resemblance, and finely exemplify the author's varied powers, especially his delicate and accurate discrimination of the degrees and shades of human character.

One of these, the character of the Rev. John Sutcliff, is an unfinished portrait; Mr. Hall, after a few unsatisfactory trials, relinquishing the attempt. The following letter to Mr. Fuller, on the occasion of this failure, will be read with interest, as an example both of his diffidence and of his sense of the obligation of a promise.

"My Dear Brother,

"I am truly concerned to tell you that I cannot succeed "at all in my attempts to draw the character of our dear "and venerable brother Sutcliff. I have made several ef- "forts, and have sketched, as well as I could, the outlines of "what I conceive to be his character; but have failed in "producing such a portrait as appears to me fit for the pub- "lic eye. I am perfectly convinced that your intimacy with "him, and your power of discrimination, will enable you to "present to posterity a much juster and more impressive "idea of him than I can. I am heartily sorry I promised "it. But promises I hold sacred; and, therefore, if you "insist upon it, and are not willing to release me from my "engagement, I will accomplish the task as well as I can. "But, if you will let the matter pass *sub silentio*, without "reproaching me, you will oblige me considerably. It ap- "pears to me that, if I ever possessed a faculty of character- "drawing, I have lost it, probably for want of use; as I am "far from taking any delight in a minute criticism on cha- "racter, to which, in my younger days, I was excessively "addicted. Both our tastes and talents change with the "progress of years. The purport of these lines, however, "is to request you to absolve me from my promise, in which "light I shall interpret your silence; holding myself ready, "however, to comply with your injunctions,

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Your affectio ate Brother,

Sept. 1814. "R. Hall."*

* me of the most delightful of these pi tures, as those of Toller,'

For several years, about this time, Mr. Hall's thoughts were greatly occupied upon the subject of "Terms of Communion." His first publication in reference to it appeared in 1815: but they who were admitted to his intimacy, will recollect how often, three or four years before its appearance, he advocated a cautious revision of the practice of nearly all the churches, with regard to constant or occasional communion; and how successfully he refuted the arguments of those who favoured any narrow system of exclusion. He regarded the existence of a principle which made so many churches points of repulsion instead of centres of union, as a very serious evil; and often deplored it in language similar to that which commences his first production on the subject.

The discussion, indeed, is neither of slight, nor of temporary interest. It involves the prevailing practice of every church in christendom, whether established, or independent of an establishment; and it includes an answer to the inquiry how purity of faith and conduct shall be preserved, without an infringement of the principles requisite to make *every* church a portion of that sublime invisible society, the "Church Universal," constituted of all the members of Christ's mystical body.

Rapidly approaching, as we seem to be, to that state of things, when all churches, national as well as others, will feel the expediency, if not the necessity, of reverting to first principles in modifying and improving their several communities, the controversy on "Terms of Communion" forces itself upon the attention as one of primary importance, serving to ascertain and determine almost every question of value in reference to ecclesiastical polity. Mr. Hall thus states the purpose of the investigation:

"The practice of incorporating private opinions and "human inventions with the constitution of a church, "and with the terms of communion, has long appeared "to the author untenable in its principle, and pernicious

Fuller, Fletcher, Brainerd, and Henry Martyn, were composed after Mr. Hall had thus declined the character of Sutcliff from a feeling of incompetency.

"in its effects. There is no position in the whole com-"pass of theology of the truth of which he feels a strong-"er persuasion, than that no man, or set of men, are "entitled to prescribe, as an indispensable condition of "communion, what the New Testament has not enjoined "as a condition of salvation. To establish this position "is the principal object of the following work; and "though it is more immediately occupied in the discus-"sion of a case which respects the Baptists and Pedo-"baptists, that case, as attempted to be decided upon the "principle now mentioned, is no more than the applica-"tion of it to a particular instance."

In this discussion, more perhaps than in any in which Mr. Hall engaged, he manifested his power of "breath-"ing a soul into the driest bones of controversy." At the same time, while he contended for that true Christian liberty which many have sacrificed from mistaken notions of what "unity of spirit" really requires, he sedulously guarded against the deduction of latitudinarian notions and practices from the principles which he so earnestly and successfully advocated.

"He who contends," says Mr. Hall, "that no agree-"ment in doctrine is essential to communion, must, if he "understands himself, either mean to assert that Christ-"ianity contains no fundamental truths, or that it is not "necessary that a member of a church should be a "Christian. The first of these positions sets aside the "necessity of faith altogether; the last is a contradiction "in terms."

In order to obtain this agreement, creeds, and summaries of the principles of religion, have often been framed and enforced; and

"Though these summaries of Christian doctrine fre-"quently contain articles, which, admitting them to be "true, are not fundamental, they were originally deemed "such by their fabricators, or supposed at least to be ac-"companied with such a plenitude of evidence as no "sincere inquirer could resist; and they are continued "under the same persuasion."

The inefficacy of such terms of communion, except

they are very simple and confined strictly to fundamentals, is fully confirmed by experience, if it thus become evident that they are altogether unavailing in producing uniformity of sentiment with regard to the points they comprehend; that is, if it be manifest that they fail *as a test*. And if, in addition to this, they are made the substitute for discipline, by superseding the necessity of *moral qualifications*, they become scripturally *unlawful*, independently of their violation of the apostolic injunction (in Rom. xiv. xv. &c.) to tolerate a diversity of sentiment on points avowedly not fundamental. If, then, an apparent uniformity may be confounded with real "unity of spirit," if the spirit of the Gospel be lost sight of in pursuing the phantom instead of the substance, and if that causeless or unnecessary separation of one part of the church of Christ from another, which is essentially *a schism*, has resulted from the mistake, it is more than time that some judicious, strenuous efforts were made to expose and remove the evil; and such are those of Mr. Hall. "All attempts (says he) to urge men "forward, even in the right path, beyond the measure of "their light, are impracticable, if they were lawful; and "unlawful, if they were practicable. Augment their "light, conciliate their affections, and they will follow of "their own accord."

I have thus, though but for a moment, adverted to this controversy, that the general reader may not be induced to undervalue it. It occupies the third volume of the present edition of the Works. Of the different writers who opposed Mr. Hall on this occasion, Mr. Kinghorn was, unquestionably, the most acute and learned. His volume should be read, in connexion with Mr. Hall's, by such as wish to view the question in all its bearings.* Mr. Hall's part of the controversy is conducted with his characteristic frankness and decision; and evinces the same clearness, copiousness, strength, and majesty of language, as he uniformly displayed upon

* Mr Kinghorn studied under Mr. Hall at Bristol, and died about a year after him. He was much beloved by the church and congregation at Norwich, over which he was placed, and greatly respected by the inhabitants of the city.

every subject to which he bent his mind with all its power. He proceeds in the argument with remarkable acumen, and employs the most convincing logic. He very successfully exposes the false reasoning of his opponent, showing not only that it is indefensible, but that it often leads to consequences which are self-contradictory and absurd. Much of this work is written in Mr. Hall's most animated style, and it frequently exhibits flashes of wit which remind the reader of those of Pascal in his Provincial Letters. Sometimes when a narrow, illiberal sentiment, calculated to check the spirit of christian union and affection, excites his indignation, he rebukes with a cutting severity: and I feel no inclination to deny, that in *a few* cases, he has suffered himself to indulge in terms of sarcasm, if not of contempt, that add nothing to his argument, and had been better spared. Yet, as one of his bitterest opponents has declared, "it was seldom that his thunder was heard, but the bolt was felt; and both were exercised on the side of truth and virtue."

In these, as in others of his controversial pieces, the reader may safely reckon upon much that is eloquent and impressive, apart from what immediately relates to the questions under debate. Among which may be specified his severe but just strictures on Antinomianism, the fine remarks on excommunication, the beautiful delineation of the conduct of our Lord, the passages distinguishing between conditions of salvation and meritorious conditions, and those in which he discriminates between the atonement contemplated as a fact, and as a doctrine, and thence infers "the peculiar glory of the gospel in contradistinction from the law of Moses."*

About this time† Mr. Hall had a correspondence with

* See Vol. III., in various places.

† Nearly at this time, also, viz., in September, 1817, the faculty of Marischal College, Aberdeen, at the instance of their late learned principal, Dr. W. L. Brown, conferred upon Mr. Hall the degree of D. D. in testimony of their high admiration of his talents and character. He felt much gratified by this mark of their good opinion; but, having a conscientious objection to the title of Doctor of *Divinity*, he never adopted it.

a friend on a kindred subject, that of occasional communion. That individual, though a decided Baptist, in reference both to the mode of baptism, and the character of those who are entitled to it, and long a member of a dissenting church was in the habit of occasional communion with an episcopalian chapel in his neighbourhood, of which the minister held evangelical sentiments. Mr. Hall expressed a desire to be acquainted with his reasons for this practice. In reply, he informed Mr. Hall that he thought those reasons flowed obviously from the principles for which he himself was so earnestly and successfully contending; that one of the highest enjoyments of a man who humbly hoped he constituted a part of the church universal, was to testify his feeling of brotherhood with other assemblies of orthodox Christians than that with which he was immediately connected, by holding communion with them at convenient seasons: that in this respect, as the political grounds of dissent were of very little value in his esteem, he made no mental distinction between established and separate churches: that, having no conscientious objection to kneeling at the sacrament, and having resolved never to communicate even occasionally but where he had reason to believe the bulk of those who partook of the sacrament were real Christians, he felt no hesitation as to the propriety, while he could speak decidedly as to the comfort, of the course he had pursued. He stated, farther, that, with Richard Baxter he "disowned the principle of many who think "their presence maketh them guilty of all that is faulty "in the public worship and ministration: for this dis- "solveth all worshipping churches on earth without ex- "ception;" that he considered Baxter's refutation of Dr. Owen's arguments against occasional communion as complete: and that he would rather err in the spirit of Baxter and Howe, on such a question, than be right according to the narrow measures by which too many would enforce a contrary practice. Mr. Hall's reply, which is subjoined, exemplifies his usual manner of guarding against a misapprehension of the real extent of his agreement with another, upon any disputed point.

"6 *March*, 1818.

'MY DEAR FRIEND.

"I am much obliged to you for the frankness with which "you have answered my inquiries. Perhaps I may not be "quite prepared to go with you the full extent of your mo- "deration; though on this I have by no means made up my "mind. I admire the spirit with which you are actuated, "and esteem you more than ever for the part you have "acted. I perfectly agree with you that *the old grounds* of "dissent are the true ones, and that our recent apologists "have mixed up too much of a political cast in their reason- "ings upon this subject. Though I should deprecate "the founding of *any established* church, in the popular "sense of that term, I think it very injudicious to lay that "as the corner stone of dissent. We have much stronger "ground in the *specific* corruptions of the church of Eng- "land, ground which our pious ancestors occupied, and "which may safely defy every attempt of the most powerful "and acute minds to subvert. With respect to occasional "conformity, I by no means think it involves an abandon- "ment of dissent; and I am inclined to think that were I "in a private station, (not a minister, I mean,) I should, "under certain circumstances, and in certain situations, be "disposed to practise it; though nothing would induce me "to acknowledge myself a permanent member of the church "of England.

"In regard to episcopacy, it appears to me entirely a "human, though, certainly, a very early invention. It was "unknown, I believe, in the apostolical times; with the ex- "ception, probably, of the latter part of John's time. But, "as it was practised in the second and third centuries, I "should have no conscientious objection to it. As it subsists "*at present* among us, I am sorry to say I can scarcely con- "ceive a greater [abuse]. It subverts equally the rights of "pastors and of people, and is nothing less than one of the "worst relics of the papal hierarchy. Were every thing "else what it ought to be in the established church, prelacy, "as it now subsists, would make me a decided dissenter.

* * * * * *

"I remain, my dear Sir, with great esteem,

"Yours most affectionately,

"R. HALL."*

* It may not be improper to add now (October 1838), in order simply to prevent misapprehension, that the above letter was addressed to the author of this memoir.

Mr. Hall's engagements for the press, numerous and heavy as they were, to one who wrote with so much difficulty and pain, did not draw him aside from pastoral watchfulness over his church and congregation; nor were they permitted to shorten those hours of retirement in which he sought "converse with God." Nothing, on the contrary, was more evident than his increased spirit of devotion as he advanced in life. About the year 1812, he commenced the practice of setting apart one day in a month for especial prayer and fasting. On these occasions he retired into his study immediately after the morning domestic worship, and remained there until the evening. Finding this eminently conducive to his own comfort, at the end of about two years he recommended the church to hold quarterly fasts. They at once adopted the recommendation; and some of the members often speak of the first meeting for this purpose, as a most extraordinary season of devout and solemn feeling.

About the same time, or somewhat earlier, he announced his opinion of the disadvantage arising from the presence of others besides the communicants on sacramental occasions. In a short address he explained the customs of the early Christians with regard to the Lord's Supper, and showed that the admission of spectators, who were not members of the church, during the celebration, was, comparatively, a modern innovation. He pointed out the inconclusiveness of the ordinary arguments,—that spectators often receive benefit from the addresses of the ministers, and that therefore their exclusion was cutting them off from good, and that such exclusion was an infringement of religious liberty. He also stated that the presence of such spectators deprived him of much comfort during the communion service, and that he should regard their keeping away as a personal kindness to himself. His address was received with affectionate respect; and from that time those who had previously remained to witness the administration discontinued the custom.

Some time after the conclusion of his part of the controversy on "Terms of Communion," he made an effort

to persuade the church at Harvey Lane to adopt the practice of "mixed communion;" but finding that it would disturb the peace which had so long subsisted in the society, he relinquished his intention, and recommended the formation of a distinct church on the mixed communion principle, its sacramental service being held on the morning of the same sabbath on which the "strict communion" church held its corresponding service in the afternoon. This plan was adopted and followed during Mr. Hall's continuance at Leicester, without causing any interruption of the harmony which prevailed among the different classes of worshippers.

Having frequently noticed the difficulty with which some pious individuals introduce religious conversation, and after lamenting, indeed, his own deficiencies in this respect, it occurred to him, in conversation with some intelligent friends, that the difficulty might be greatly diminished, by publishing a selection of texts for every day in the year, for the use of the members of his church and congregation. By this expedient it was hoped that each, when meditating upon one of the portions of Scripture thus recommended, might be led to reflect that several of his religious associates had their thoughts employed simultaneously upon the same passage, and that this conviction would prepare the way for free and beneficial conversation. He therefore published in a very cheap form, "A Collection of References to Scripture Passages, doctrinal, practical and experimental, for the furtherance of knowledge and grace in all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. For every day in the year;" to which he prefixed the following remarks:—

"That the word of Christ dwell in us richly is an apos-
"tolical injunction, which no sincere Christian will permit
"himself to neglect. It has been judged however, that some
"benefit might result from selecting a particular passage of
"Scripture as the special subject of meditation for the day,
"by which the difficulty of choice might be obviated, and a
"certain rallying point be presented to the thoughts. It is
"also conjectured that it is desirable that a number of Chris-
"tians be invited to make *the same* passage the subject of

" devout meditation, by which a tacit communion of minds " may be maintained and brotherly love promoted.

" An expedient of this kind has long been adopted among " the Moravian brethren. A little volume is annually circu- " lated among them, consisting of a passage of Scripture for " every day in the year; and their experience attests the " advantage they have derived from such a humble in- " strument of piety. This small collection of passages for " the ensuing year is offered to the candid attention of a " particular Christian society, from a similar motive, and " with a view to the same benefit. The efficacy, however, " of every instrument must depend upon its application: " and if the members of the church, for whose use it is espe- " cially intended, will take the trouble to turn to their " Bibles and meditate on the passage referred to for each " day, it is surely no presumption to hope that they will be " sensible of the benefit derived from it in the cultivation of " devotional feeling and the increase of fraternal affection. " The texts are only *referred to*, and not printed at large, " partly on the ground of economy, and partly because it " has been supposed that the act of turning to the Bible, in " order to peruse the text, may have the effect of engraving " it more deeply on the mind, as well as of inviting attention " to the context.

" That this little manual may be productive of spiritual " improvement, is the sincere and ardent prayer of the per- " sons engaged in its compilation.

" Robert Hall."

In the year 1823, the minister of a Unitarian congregation at Leicester, having delivered a series of what are usually denominated " Challenge Lectures," in defence of his own opinions, to hear which individuals of other persuasions were publicly invited, Mr. Hall felt it to be his duty to offer a timely antidote to the evil. He, therefore, preached twelve lectures on the points at issue, and had the happiness to know that they were serviceable in checking the diffusion of Socinian error. His concise outline of these lectures, as well as fuller notes of two or three, are inserted in the fifth volume of the Works. He was strongly urged by several members of his congregation, and by various neighbouring ministers, to publish the whole; but uniformly replied, that though he believed they had been beneficial, he was conscious

they contained nothing that could be regarded as really new in the controversy; and that Dr. Wardlaw had so admirably occupied the ground in his sermons, already before the public, that any thing which he could offer in print would only be regarded as an impertinent intrusion.

Throughout the whole of Mr. Hall's residence at Leicester, he suffered much from his constitutional complaint; and neither his habit of smoking nor that of taking laudanum,* seemed effectually to alleviate his sufferings. Exercise, of every kind, lost its pleasure, and he, who through life grew in the delightful art of drawing happiness from the circumstances in which he found himself, was now often heard to say, " No; don't let us go yet; the present place is the best place." It was truly surprising that his constant severe pain, and the means adopted to mitigate it, did not in any measure diminish his mental energy. A little difference, was perhaps, discernible in the vivacity of his conversation; but his preaching had, as yet, lost nothing of its force. In letters to his friends he expressed a hope that " a greater " savour of Jesus Christ accompanied his ministry;" and remarked, that " his strain of preaching was much less " elegant, but more intended for instruction, for awaken- " ing conviction, and carrying home truth with power to " the heart."

There can, indeed, be no question, as to the general and constantly increasing excellency of his preaching during his residence at Leicester. " I am persuaded," remarks a brother minister, who knew him long and intimately, " that there, more than any where, he bent the " whole force of his mind to prevail on sinners to be re- " conciled to God. He had incessant recourse to every " topic of warning and encouragement, that his know- " ledge, genius, and piety could suggest, to raise souls to " heaven." " And such," says an old and valuable member of his church, " was often the universality and depth of the impression, that every thing seemed moved and agitated but the materials of which the building was

* In 1812 he took from fifty to a hundred drops every night. Before 1826 the quantity had increased to a thousand drops.

composed." It was the frequent remark of another, founded upon the cogency of his appeals to the consciences of his hearers:—"They that will not leave off sinning, must, I am sure, leave off coming to meeting; for they can have no quiet there." And thus it appeared, that, as he advanced in years, though there might be a *little* less of elaboration and polish, there was more of spiritual feeling, more of tender and earnest expostulation, and of that pungency of application to the heart and conscience, which resulted from an enlarged acquaintance with human character, and a deeper knowledge of "the things of God." That the divine blessing accompanied these labours, and in many cases rendered the impression permanent, the history of the church and congregation abundantly proves.

The death of Dr. Ryland in 1825 led to Mr. Hall's invitation to take the pastoral office over the church at Broadmead, Bristol, an office which had been long and honourably sustained by that excellent individual. After some months spent in anxious deliberation, in advising with his friends, and seeking counsel from above, from the dread he felt lest he "should rush into a sphere of "action to which he was not called, and offend God by "deserting his proper post," he at length decided to dissolve his long and happy connexion with the church at Leicester.* The day of separation, the last sacrament Sabbath, March 26, 1826, was a day of anguish to him and them, of which I shall not attempt the description. Suffice it to say, that he went through the ordinary public duties with tolerable composure;† but at the sacramental service he strove in vain to conceal his emotion. In one of his addresses to the members of the church, on

* Some of the letters which passed on the occasion are inserted in this volume.

† In order that neither his feelings nor those of the congregation might be too severely tried, during the public services, he preached two sermons for the Baptist Mission:—That in the morning from Ephes. iii. 8: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." That in the evening, from Matt. vi. 10: "Thy kingdom come."

On the ensuing day he preached a farewell sermon, though not so designated, to the neighbouring ministers, at Arnsby, his native place.

adverting to the pain of separation, he was so much affected that he sat down, covered his face with his hands, and wept; they sharing in his distress, gave unequivocal signs of the deepest feeling. Mr. Eustace Carey, who was present, continued the devotional part of the service, until Mr. Hall was sufficiently recovered to proceed. At the close of the solemnity the weeping became again universal, and they parted "sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more."

Very shortly afterwards the church received from Mr. Hall the following letter of resignation:

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST MEETING IN HARVEY-LANE, LEICESTER.

"*3d April*, 1826.

"My dear Brethren and Sisters,

"I take this opportunity of solemnly and affectionately "resigning the pastoral charge which I have long sustained "among you, and of expressing, at the same time, the deep "sense I shall ever retain of the marks of affection and "esteem, with which, both collectively and individually, "you have honoured me.

"Though the providence of God has, as I conceive, called "me to labour in another part of his vineyard, my solicitude "for your spiritual welfare will ever remain unimpaired; "nor will any thing give me more joy than to hear of your "growth in grace, peace, and prosperity. My prayer will "never cease to ascend to the God of all comfort, that he will "establish your hearts in love, unite you more and more in "the fellowship of saints, and make you fruitful in every "good work.

"Let me earnestly intreat you to guard most anxiously "against whatever may tend to weaken your union, dimi-"nish your affection, or embitter your spirits against each "other. 'Let brotherly love continue:' 'Seek peace and "pursue it:' and 'may the God of peace, who brought again "from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd "of the sheep, establish, strengthen, settle, and make you "perfect.'

"I hope that, in the choice of a successor, you will ear-"nestly and anxiously seek divine direction: prefer the "useful to the splendid; the solid to the glittering and "showy; and be supplied with a pastor who will, in doc-"trine, exhibit 'uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and sound

" speech which cannot be condemned,' and be in manner
" and behaviour a pattern to believers.

" Permit me, on this occasion, to return you my sincere
" acknowledgements for the uniform kindness with which
" you have treated me, the respectful attention you have
" paid to my ministry, and the candour with which you
" have borne my infirmities.

" With my most earnest prayers for your spiritual and
" eternal welfare, I remain, my dear Brethren and Sisters,

" Your obliged and affectionate
" Friend and Brother,
" ROBERT HALL."

At the same time he addressed a letter to the mixed-communion church over which he presided; and which it is equally desirable to preserve.

TO THE OPEN COMMUNION CHURCH, MEETING IN HARVEY LANE, LEICESTER.

" MY DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS,

" I TAKE this opportunity of expressing my warmest ac-
" knowledgements for the uniform kindness and attention I
" have received at your hands, at the same time that I re-
" sign my pastoral charge among you.

" Let me hope, my dear friends, that you will still continue
' your communion, since you may rest assured that the con-
" gregation and church at Harvey Lane will never make
" choice of a pastor who will scruple the communion of
" pious Pedobaptists; and I have little doubt that in a short
" time ' the middle wall of partition' will be broken down;
" an event which I well know would give great pleasure to
" a vast majority of the Baptist Society.

" Be assured, my dear friends, that the difference of sen-
" timent between us, on one point of very inferior import-
" ance, has never, for a moment, abated any thing of my
" esteem for your character, or my sense of your kindness.

" I have had my trials, but I must in justice say, they have
" in no degree arisen from *you*, whose religious deportment
" has uniformly been such as to give me pleasure. I am so
' conscious of the credit which your exemplary conduct has
" reflected on the Christian profession, that I cannot sup-
" press my anxiety that you may continue your communion
" at Harvey Lane, not doubting that it will terminate, ere
' long, in that entire coalition with your fellow Christians,
" which the principles of Christianity demand.

" That the God of peace may take up his abode among

' you, and enrich you abundantly with every spiritual bless-
' ing in Christ Jesus, is the sincere prayer of

" My dear Brethren and Sisters,
" Your obliged and affectionate friend and brother,
" ROBERT HALL."

Two other letters which Mr. Hall wrote within a few months of his removal to Bristol, I here insert; one of them strongly marking his continued persuasion of the evil tendency of heterodox and infidel sentiments, while the other evinces the affectionate interest which he took in the welfare of Dr. Ryland's widow and family, and the characteristic energy with which, in few words, he pleaded their cause.

TO A YOUNG MINISTER.

" *February 7th*, 1826.

" DEAR SIR,

" I AVAIL myself of the opportunity afforded me by the
" kindness of * * * to convey a few lines in acknow-
" ledgement of a favour to which I ought much sooner to have
" replied. You are aware, I dare say, of my reluctance to
" writing letters, which I might urge as an excuse for my
" neglect, but that to allege a habit of transgression may be
" deemed a poor apology for the act.

" I sympathize with you sincerely under the trials attendant
" on your present situation: I am sorry for, though not at all
" surprised at them. Little, Sir, could be expected from
" uniting yourself so intimately with those with whom you
" feel no congeniality on the most interesting subjects of
" human contemplation. Of all classes (the Antinomian
" excepted) the most untractable and unimpressible people
" to deal with are those who are strongly tinctured with
' either Unitarian or Deistical pravity. Cold, conceited,
" opinionative, they are of all persons at the farthest remove
" from religious conviction and true candour, to which, how-
" ever, they make the most exclusive pretensions.

* * * * * *

" It gives me very great pleasure to find, in contradiction
" to some flying rumours, that you continue so steadfast in
" your adherence to the Gospel, and as this is the case, I do
" not doubt you will derive great benefit from your present
" situation, through the means of that increased conviction
" of the practical importance of evangelical truth, which it
" cannot fail to have produced. You will probably be dis-

" posed ere long to remove to a situation where you may " possess a greater prospect of happiness and usefulness. " If such should be your intention, it would give me great " pleasure to inform you of any eligible opening that might " occur. You are aware, probably, that I am engaged to " remove to Bristol in the spring. I should be much grati- " fied to have you as a neighbour, if any situation offered " itself worthy your attention. I hope, should you quit " your present post, you will never more entangle yourself " with a heterodox connexion. He who escapes its snares " will be almost sure not to escape its miseries.

* * * * * *

" May the Lord direct you in all your ways, is, dear Sir, " the sincere prayer of,

" Yours affectionately,
" ROBERT HALL."

TO THE REV. JOHN DYER,

SECRETARY OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

[Soliciting an Annuity for the Widow of Dr. Ryland.]

" *Bristol, Jan. 8th,* 1827.

" DEAR SIR,

" I BEG leave to trouble you with a few lines on behalf of " Mrs. Ryland. Her situation is such, that without the con- " tinuance of the aid allowed by the Society last year, she " feels herself quite incapable of remaining in her present " house, which is nothing more than a decent comfortable " habitation, and in no respect superior to what every feel- " ing mind would judge suitable to the widow of Dr. Ryland. " Her three daughters are, in a great degree, incapable of " any lucrative exertion on account of habitual ill health, " and one of them has long been so seriously ill, as to be a " source of continual expense. I say nothing of the charac- " ter and merits of Dr. Ryland, which are far above my " praise. Nor is it necessary for me to remind the commit- " tee of his early patronage of the mission, of which he was " the second father, his devotion to its interests, which min- " gled with the last pulsations of his heart, and his laborious " exertions in its service, without fee or reward. On all " these accounts I cannot but conceive the request of Mrs. " Ryland, for the continuance of the allowance of the last " year, most reasonable, and such as cannot be denied, " without bringing great discredit on the Society. Any " slight put upon Dr. Ryland in the persons of those most

" dear to him, will be found to be a miserable policy; nor " can I conceive of any thing more likely to disgust the " friends of the mission, not only in this city and vicinity, " but throughout the nation at large. Surely a religious and " philanthropic society will never allow itself to incur the " censure of ingratitude to its warmest supporters, or of " neglecting the sorrows of the fatherless and the widow.

" I am extremely sorry it is found necessary to solicit " the aid of the Society on her behalf; but as it *is* necessary, " I know none to whom I can apply with equal propriety " to recommend her case to the committee, with yourself; " nor can I doubt that an application so enforced would " prove successful. All that Mrs. Ryland presumes to hope " is, that the committee will be so kind as to continue the " disbursement they were so good to make the last year. " By an early attention to this business, you will confer a " lasting obligation on, dear Sir,

" Your obliged Friend and Brother,
" ROBERT HALL."

Mr. Hall was in his sixty-second year when he removed to Bristol, the scene of his first continuous labours, and now to become the scene of his closing ministry. Some of the friends of his early life still survived to welcome his return among them; and many others, who had profited by his pulpit exertions on his periodical visits to Bristol, congratulated themselves that he to whom, under God, they owed so much, had become their pastor. All things indeed, except his infirm state of health, seemed to conspire in promoting his own happiness as well as the prosperity of the Church with which he had again connected himself.

The church and congregation soon received numerous accessions. In writing to a friend, early in 1829, he says, " I continue to be very happy with my people, from " whom I daily receive every demonstration of affection " and respect. Our attendance is as good as I could " wish; and we have added to the *Baptist* church, during " the last year, twenty-seven, and six are standing can- " didates for baptism. For these tokens of the divine " presence I desire to be thankful."

His heavenly Father during the concluding years of his life, made a rich provision for his social enjoyments,

both in his family, and among his friends. Besides the comfort of frequent association with many of his own flock, his pleasures were greatly heightened by intercourse with Mr. Foster, and the tutors of the Baptist Academy, as well as with several clergymen and other ministers, and laymen, residing in Bristol and its vicinity. It is true, that wherever he went, or in whatever he engaged, he carried with him the complaint from which he had suffered so much and so long. It had become, as his esteemed friend Mr. Addington termed it, "an internal apparatus of torture," accompanied frequently by a sensation designated by himself in describing his symptoms to an eminent physician, as "a living dissolution;" yet, such was the peculiar structure of his mind, doubtless fortified and prepared for patient endurance by an energy imparted from above, that though his appointment by day and by night was incessant pain, yet high *enjoyment* was, notwithstanding, the law of his existence.

Between his final removal to Bristol and his death, he visited his friends at Cambridge twice, namely, in 1827 and 1829. These visits were undertaken with the sense of responsibility of one who had formerly been their pastor: and he made it a rule so to arrange his time while there as to see, converse with, and exhort, every member of the church, and a great proportion of the congregation. He paid also one visit to his recently quitted flock at Leicester; and two to his friends in London. On these occasions the anxiety to hear him preach was as great as it had ever been; while his sermons were characterized in a high degree by the qualities that had long distinguished them,—with the addition of a stronger manifestation of religious and benevolent affections, a still more touching persuasiveness of manner, continued with an increasing intensity of feeling, with deeper and deeper solemnity of appeal; the entire effect being greatly augmented by the sudden introduction, just as the last sentence seemed dropping from his lips, of some new topic of application or of caution, most urgently pressed; as though he *could* not cease to invite, to warn, to expostulate, until the "Great Master of Assemblies" vouchsafed to him the assurance that he had not been pleading his cause in vain."*

Mr. Hall's increasing infirmities did not extinguish his literary ardour, or abate his love of reading. Except during the first years of his residence at Cambridge, reading, and the thinking it called forth, were his incessant occupation to the very close of life; and both the pursuit and its application to the benefit of others, yielded him the highest delight. In his early life, as I have already mentioned, it was common with him to carry on five or six different courses of study, simultaneously. But for the last ten or twelve years, he mostly confined himself to one book at a time, and read it to the end. His reading continued to be very extensive and varied (for it was his decided opinion that every species of knowledge might be rendered subservient to religion), but his predilection, next to the scriptures, was for works of clear, strong, and conclusive reasoning, though conveyed in language far from elevated, and sometimes perhaps obscure. Thus he, for sixty years, read Jonathan Edwards's writings with undiminished pleasure. And of Chillingworth's "Religion of Protestants," he has often been known to say, "It is just like reading a novel:" which, indeed, was his usual expression of commendation, with regard to such works of a dry or abstract nature, as discovered subtlety, depth, or vigour of thought. In this class he placed the works of Jeremy Bentham, for whom he entertained the highest estimation, as an original, profound, and accurate thinker; observing often, that in the particular province of his speculations, the science of legislation, he had advanced to the limits of reason; and that if *he* were compelled to legislate for the world upon uninspired principles, "he should take Ben-
" tham, and go from state to state with as firm a step as

* It was seldom that the friends who attempted to take down Mr. Hall's sermons did not unconsciously relinquish writing as he approached the close. The reader, however, who never had the privilege of hearing him preach, will be able to form *some* conception of his impressive terminations, from the last ten pages of the sermon on "the Glory of God in concealing." See, also, the last three pages of the sermon on "the Glory of Christ's Kingdom;" and portions of that on "the Lamb of God."

"though he walked upon a pavement of adamant."*

If, at any time, he could not settle a point of interest without studying a language of which he was ignorant, that constituted no impediment. Shortly before he quitted Leicester, a friend found him one morning, very early, lying on the carpet, with an Italian dictionary and a volume of Dante before him. Being about to quit the room, he said, "No, Sir, don't go. I will tell you what I "have been about for some weeks. A short time since "I was greatly delighted with a parallel between the "Paradise Lost and the Divine Comedy of Dante, which "I read in the Edinburgh Review. But in matters of "taste, as well as others, I always like to judge for my-"self; and so I have been studying Italian. I have "caught the idiom, and am reading Dante with great "relish; though I cannot yet say, with Milton,

'Now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly or I can run.'"

It may seem somewhat out of place, yet I shall be forgiven if I here insert an extract of a letter just received from Mr. Ryley, one of Mr. Hall's most intelligent Leicester friends, in reference to his course of reading there.

"It was what some men might think desultory; but "it was essentially a constant habit of grappling with "the strong. *Belles Lettres* he did not altogether neglect, "though he held the average of such literature in small "estimation. Poetry he seldom read, nor did he seem "to have ever studied it *con amore*. He thought Gray's "Elegy the finest thing ever written. Milton was his "favourite. There was something peculiar in his habits "respecting poetry. He spoke lightly of poets, with few "exceptions, and those few by no means what might "have been expected from his own highly imaginative cast of mind. Yet, when he did get hold of an exqui-"site poem, he would read it with intense attention, ap-

* He always recommended those who were likely to be offended with the strangeness of Bentham's style, to study his principles through the medium of his elegant French commentator, M. Dumont.

"parently with the deepest interest, and then abuse it. "With the exception of Milton, who is, in fact, an "antique, he preferred the ancient to the modern poets. "Of the poetry of our own day he spoke with a con-"tempt, which an accurate or extensive acquaintance "with it would have compelled him to relinquish. He "had not, I think, made history a distinct and conse "cutive study, though he had read many of the ori "ginal historians. He seemed to feel this of late years, "and gave much of his time to the subject."

His enjoyment of the writings of the illustrious men of Greece and Rome remained unimpaired to the last. Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, suggested to him many noble arguments in favour of an internal spring of morality, which he employed with his wonted skill in support of the religion of pure motive and devotedness of spirit. Virgil's Georgics he characterized as the most finished of human compositions; and he continued to prefer Virgil to Homer. He greatly admired the copiousness, grace, and harmony, of Cicero's diction; but considered Demosthenes by far the most powerful orator the world had known; and, after speaking with fervid applause of the oration περι Στεφανου, added, that he thought it impossible for a man of soul and feeling to read a single page without catching fire. Only a few months before his last illness, in classifying the different natures and respective effects of the eloquence of reason, of passion, and of imagination, he selected his principal illustrations from Demosthenes, and endeavoured to show, that where the two former kinds of eloquence existed in due proportion, the third was of very minor consequence. The individual to whom he made these remarks was struck, as he proceeded, with the developement which they supplied of the causes of the deep impression made by his own pulpit addresses; and imputed his more sparing use of imagery in later years, rather to the deliberate conviction of his mind than to any diminution of the imaginative faculty.

But I must restrain myself, and pass to Mr. Hall's every-day habits after his return to Bristol. The course

of his life at home, when not interrupted by visitors, was very uniform. He generally rose and took his breakfast about nine o'clock. Breakfast was immediately succeeded by family worship. At this exercise he went regularly through the Scriptures, reading a portion of the Old Testament in the morning, and of the New Testament in the evening. On Sunday morning he almost invariably read the ninety-second Psalm, being short, and appropriate to the day. He also read in his family the translation of the four Gospels, by Campbell, whom he particularly admired, and often recommended, as an accurate translator and a critic of great acuteness, taste, and judgement. He seldom made any remarks on the portion of Scripture, except when strangers were present who he knew would be disappointed at their entire omission. He regarded himself as very incompetent to render this brief kind of exposition instructive. In the prayer that succeeded he was not in the habit of forming his petitions on the passage of Scripture just read, though the prayer was usually of considerable length, and very minute in its appropriation. He adverted specifically to all the persons belonging to his family, present and absent; never forgot the people of his care; and dwelt on the distinct cases of members of the Church that were under any kind of trial or affliction.

After breakfast and worship he retired into his study, and uniformly spent some time in devotion, afterwards generally reading a portion of the Hebrew Bible. For the two last years he read daily two chapters of Matthew Henry's Commentary; a work which he had not before read consecutively, though he had long known and valued it. As he proceeded he felt increasing interest and pleasure, greatly admiring the copiousness, variety, and pious ingenuity of the thoughts; the simplicity, strength and pregnancy of the expressions.* He earnestly recommend-

* Soon after Mr. Hall's removal to Bristol, a respectable London bookseller offered him £100 to write a commendatory preface to a new edition of this Commentary. The proposal gave him much uneasiness. "I write a recommendation to Matthew Henry! Never! Mr. —— "must think me a most mercenary wretch. Why did not he offer me "£100 to paint a diamond, or to extol the sweet scent of a violet?"

ed this Commentary to his daughters; and on hearing the eldest reading, for successive mornings, to the second, he expressed the highest delight. The remainder of the morning until dinner, about three o'clock, was spent in reading some work of learning, or of severe thought. After dinner he generally retired to his study, and if not in so much pain as to prevent it, slept for some time.

Every Tuesday evening a meeting termed "the conference" is held in the vestry at Broadmead: it is ordinarily attended by about two hundred persons; and two of the students belonging to the Bristol Education Society, or one of the students, and the president, speak on a passage of Scripture previously selected for the purpose. Mr. Hall was generally present, and concluded by speaking for about a quarter of an hour on the subject of the preceding addresses. He also attended the prayer meetings, in the same place, on Thursday evenings; except once a month, namely, on the Thursday previous to the administration of the Lord's Supper, when he preached.

The other evenings in the week, except Saturday (and that, indeed, not always excepted), he usually spent at the house of one or other of his congregation, with a few friends, who were invited to meet him. His inability to walk having greatly increased, his friends generally sent a carriage for him about six o'clock, and conveyed him back about ten.

It is difficult to say whether he had greater fondness for retirement or for company. It displeased him if, especially by sudden interruptions, he was obliged to give up his morning hours of study to visitors; and it would commonly have been a disappointment, if he had not the opportunity of spending his evenings in society. If he were, at any time, thrown among persons of distinguished talents and attainments, and their general character pleased him, it was soon shown how truth and knowledge might be educed by the operation of intellect upon intellect, and how rich a field of instruction and delight would thus be open for the general enjoyment of the party. Usually, however, his choice turned simply upon

the prerequisite of piety. He sought for no other acquisitions in his associates than the graces of the Spirit: intelligence added to the enjoyment, but was not essential to it. The society of old friends had with him an exquisite charm, which was greatly heightened if their fathers had been known and esteemed by him or his father; such intercourse, requiring no effort, gave full scope to his affections, without disturbing his mental repose. He uniformly retired from these evening parties full of grateful references to the pleasure which he had felt. If any of his family who accompanied him happened to say that the evening had been dull, (which they would very naturally do if *he* had not been drawn out), he would reply, "I don't think so. It was very pleasant. I enjoyed it. I enjoy every thing."*

* A Reviewer of the first edition of this Memoir and the Works, makes some remarks in connexion with this, which I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting.

"Here is a manifest indication of the natural temper and habit of "the man: and, light as the circumstance may possibly appear to some, "to us, we confess, it is one of the most instructive and glorious pas- "sages in his whole biography. Here was a man, whose powers "seemed almost adapted for converse with disembodied spirits,— "whose thoughts were frequently 'wandering through eternity,'—a "man, too, whose life was a constant wrestling against bodily anguish, "—whose corporeal structure was 'an apparatus of torment,'—and "who yet was able to seek and to find delight among the humbler re- "creations of society, and to exclaim in the gratitude and fulness of "his heart, '*I enjoy every thing!*'—Behold this, ye despisers, and won- "der! Think of this,—and then turn to the last hours of the sensual- "ist and the infidel,—of him, whose genius, it is to be feared, is, to this "day, as a *Lying Spirit* to many of the children of disobedience! "Hall, on the rack of a diseased organization, is able to enjoy every "thing. Byron, when his temples are throbbing with the self-inflicted "pains of a vicious life, cries out. 'There is nothing but misery in this "world, I think!' If this contrast does not speak to the hearts and "understandings of men, the voice of wisdom would be heard in vain "from the jaws of the sepulchre itself. 'To enjoy is to obey.' was "the maxim of the one; and *his* lips were touched with the living "flame of the altar. 'To disobey is to enjoy,' was the principle of "the other; and out of his mouth there leaped forth sparks, such as "might *set on fire the whole course of nature*. And when examples "like these are recorded for our instruction, does it not seem as if the "Lord himself were speaking to us, and calling heaven and earth to "witness against us, that life and death, blessing and cursing, are, even "in this world, most manifestly set before us?"—*British Critic*, "April, 1833.

Mr. Hall, having previously assembled his own family for worship, commonly retired to rest a little before eleven o'clock; but, after his first sleep, which lasted about two hours, he quitted his bed to obtain an easier position on the floor, or upon three chairs; and would then employ himself in reading the book on which he had been engaged during the day. Sometimes, indeed often, the laudanum, large as the doses had become, did not sufficiently neutralize his pain, to remove the necessity for quitting his bed a second time.* In these cases he would again put on the dress prepared to keep him adequately warm, and resume his reading. On Sunday morning, as soon as he awoke, it was usual with him to say, "This is the Lord's day. This is the day the Lord "hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." And he often impressed it on his family, that they ought "not to "think their own thoughts," or "to find their own plea- "sure," on that day.

He did not pursue any plan of training, or of discipline, with his children. He was remarkably affectionate and indulgent; but he did nothing systematically to correct defects, to guide or excite their minds. Now and then he recommended his daughters to read some particular book; one, perhaps, that he had himself read with peculiar satisfaction: but beyond this there do not appear to have been any direct, specific endeavours to impart knowledge, or, in any uniform manner, to inculcate religious principles.

When, however, any of his children were about to quit home for a short time, it was his practice to summon them to his study, exhort them, and pray with them. One of his daughters, on writing to a friend after his death, says, "Well I remember that, when I was a child, "on leaving home for a few days, or on going to school, "he would call me into the study, give me the tenderest "advice, make me kneel down by him at the same chair, "and then, both bathed in tears, would he fervently sup-

* For more than twenty years he had not been able to pass a whole night in bed. When this is borne in mind, it is indeed astonishing that he wrote and published so much; nay, that he did not sink into dotage before he was fifty years of age

"plicate the divine protection for me. This, I believe, "he did with regard to all of us on leaving home, while "young." Their minds were also often deeply impressed, by hearing him, as they passed his study door, commending them, by name, with the utmost fervency, to God, and entreating those blessings for each, which, in his judgement, each most needed.*

He was not in the habit of keeping a regular journal, nor, generally speaking, did he approve of it, from a persuasion that it tempted to an artificial tone of expression which did not accord with the actual state of the heart. But on some solemn occasions he made a short note in one of his memorandum books, containing hints of texts, &c.

Thus: "New-year's day, January 1st, 1826. I have be-'gun the year with a sincere resolution, in the strength of "divine grace, to devote myself wholly and entirely to God: "but, knowing my extreme weakness and corruption, I dare "place no dependence whatever on my own resolutions. I "have on many occasions, found them unstable as water. "I can only cast myself on the mercy of my God, and cry "with the Psalmist, 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.' "O thou most holy and merciful Lord God, I beseech Thee "to take up thine abode in my heart, and shape me entirely "anew. Amen. Amen."

Again, on his birth day, 1828. "This day I commence "my 64th [65th] year. What reason have I to look with "shame and humiliation on so long a tract of years spent "to so little purpose! Alas! I am ashamed of my barren-"ness and unprofitableness. Assist me, O Lord, by Thy "grace, that I may spend the short residue of my days in a "more entire devotion to Thy service. It is my purpose, in "the strength of divine grace, to take a more minute inspec-"tion into the state of my heart, and the tenour of my ac-"tions, and to make such observations and memorandums "as circumstances may suggest. But to Thee, O Lord, do I "look for all spiritual strength, to keep Thy way, and to do "Thy will."

* His habit of oral, audible, private prayer, rested upon the conviction, that silent prayer was apt to degenerate into meditation; while, from our compound nature, a man cannot but be affected by the sound of his own voice, when adequately expressing what is really felt.

Mr. Hall still evinced a peculiar solicitude for the welfare of the poorer members of his flock, and greatly lamented his incapacity, from the loss of locomotive energy, to seek them out in their own habitations, and associate with them frequently, as he had done with the poor at Cambridge and Leicester. He publicly expressed his concern that some plan was not arranged for his meeting them in small parties at specified times, and assured them of the cordial readiness with which his part of such a plan should be executed. This, I believe, was not accomplished.

The indications of infirm age now rapidly exhibited themselves, but happily were unaccompanied by a decaying mind, or a querulous spirit. The language of his conduct, and of his heart, corresponded with that of the pious ancient, "Lord, give me patience now, and ease hereafter!" If tempests come they will not last long, but soon will be hushed into an eternal calm.

His inability to take exercise, on account of the gradual increase of his complaint, gave rise, about six years before his death, to another disorder, formidable in its nature and fatal in its issue. The results of a plethoric habit became more and more apparent. "Thus," adopting the language of Mr. Addington, "the system of the blood-vessels had a laborious duty to perform in circulating their fluid, which, for want of the full aid of muscular exertion, could not be equally distributed. The smaller ones on the surface of the body, and in the extremities, never appeared to derive a sufficient quantity of blood to furnish the usual proportion of animal heat, while the large trunks in the interior became overloaded. The natural consequence was, that the heart, on whose power the propulsion of the blood to the extremities depends, being over stimulated and oppressed by the condition of the large vessels, became weakened; and, occasionally failing in the regular and equable transmission of the blood, would produce a sensation of distress in the region of the chest." The malady thus produced, manifested itself in paroxysms, which recurred at intervals of a few weeks, sometimes,

of only a few days; they were usually severe, and, some of them very alarming. His church and congregation, anticipating the loss of their revered pastor at no very distant period, resolved, on his recovery from one of these severe attacks, to urge upon him with earnestness and affection the publication of a volume of his sermons. The following letter, signed by seventy members of the church and constant attendants upon Mr. Hall's ministry, was laid before him, by a deputation appointed for the purpose.

TO THE REV. ROBERT HALL.

VERY DEAR SIR,

ALLOW us to express the great pleasure that your recovery from your late indisposition has given to our minds. We are truly grateful to the Supreme Disposer for your restoration to such a degree of health and strength; and we earnestly pray, that, for the highest good to ourselves and many others, you may be long continued among us in the best exercise of all your faculties. While we pray and hope that this may be the case, the lapse of time, the precariousness of human life, and your recent seizure, concur to impress with peculiar force on our minds the conviction of the uncertain tenure by which we hold what we justly reckon among the first of our religious advantages, the opportunity of receiving your public instructions. We would, therefore, with all becoming deference, but *very earnestly*, request, that as a token of your regard for our spiritual and eternal welfare, you would leave with us a little sample of those most beautiful, powerful, and truly evangelical discourses that we are constantly hearing from your lips. We are very sensible that we make a large request; but it would be to those of us who may reach the time when the voice cannot any more convey to our ears the saving wisdom, a wonderful gratification to have a record of a small part of what we have listened to with so much pleasure, and we trust edification, to read ourselves, to recommend to our children, and propose as a model to our rising teachers. While we entertain a lively sense of the great and varied merits of the discourses that you have given to the public, it may be permitted us to say, that, having been delivered on public occasions, they have not the general application to the interior exercises of the christian life which has distinguished many of those that we have heard in the ordinary course of your instruction.

If our earnest desires should induce the publication of a few of those discourses that have been preached for our spiritual improvement, and characterized by such clearness and force of reason, such simplicity, strength, and beauty of language, such an union of doctrine tending to piety and virtue, and of morality enforced and animated by the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, we shall feel that we have promoted an important service to vast numbers beyond the limits of our particular connexion, as well as to multitudes in the next generation.

That you may be long spared as a blessing among us, and indulged with all the supports and comforts of the true religion, is the fervent prayer of

YOUR AFFECTIONATE HEARERS.

Mr. Hall was deeply affected by this proof of his people's regard, and promised to take their request into his most serious consideration; but his reluctance to writing naturally increasing with his infirmities, he never found himself able to make the preparations for the press so anxiously desired.

In 1828, having some public engagements which took him to London, he was persuaded by his friends to take the advice of the late Dr. Armstrong; from which, however, no permanent good resulted. By the summer of 1830 the disorder had increased so seriously, that his medical friends at Bristol recommended a suspension of his pastoral duties for a few weeks, that he might try the effect of a total change of air and scene.

He, therefore, spent some time at Coleford, in the forest of Dean, where, in consequence of a previous arrangement, he met his old and valued friend, the Rev. Isaiah Birt, and enjoyed much happiness in his society. He also spent a few weeks at Cheltenham. At both these places he preached with his accustomed talent; and his general appearance, too clearly indicating that the close of his ministerial labours was at hand, gave a deeper impression to his instructions and exhortations. His own feelings with respect to the state of his health, as well as his undiminished susceptibility of enjoyment of new

scenes, may be gathered from a letter addressed to Mr. Addington.

Cheltenham, 7th October, 1830.

" My dear Sir,

" I beg pardon for not replying sooner to your very kind " letter, in which you were so good as to express some soli- " citude respecting the effect of my visit to Cheltenham.

* * * *

" I can say little at present respecting the ultimate pros- " pect of benefit. I have had, now and then, a very slight " return of my complaint in the chest, but on the whole I " think I am considerably improved in the state of health. " I feel more vigour, and am more firm and strong than when " I came.

* * * *

" In my way, I spent a night at Berkeley, and was highly " delighted with the castle. It is an awful and majestic " pile, and replete with such relics of barbarous and bloody " times, as cannot fail to make a powerful impression on the " imagination. I saw the very room where Edward the Se- " cond was so cruelly murdered, and, as they say, the very " instrument with which the deed was perpetrated: also an " awful dungeon, about forty feet deep, circular, and the " walls perfectly smooth, so as to preclude all hope of es- " cape.

" I have passed two Lord's days at Cheltenham, preach- " ing once each day, and one at Shortwood, where I preached " twice. I was highly delighted with all I met with there. " The most enchanting natural beauties combine with 'the " beauties of holiness,' to render it a delightful place. The " sabbath I spent there was one of the pleasantest I ever " [enjoyed]; there is a congregation of about twelve hun- " dred hearers, with a prodigious number of young people, " 'inquiring the way to Zion.' May the Lord send them a " pastor after his own heart!

* * * *

" I remain, my dear Sir,

" With much esteem,

" Your obliged and affectionate Friend,

" R. Hall."

When absent from home, Mr. Hall was in the habit of writing to his children. My narrow limits have prevented my giving extracts from any of those letters; but I am induced to insert part of one, written at this time to his son, who had been placed with a respectable chemist and druggist at Bristol, in the hope that it may be useful to other youths in similar circumstances.

15th October, 1830.

" My dear Robert,

" I have long designed to write to you, that I might com- 'municate to you some hints of advice, which I could con- " vey more easily, and perhaps more effectually, than by " speaking.

" I need not tell you, my dear boy, how solicitous I am " for your welfare in both worlds, and how often I have " borne you on my heart in my secret addresses to that " Father which is in heaven. But, alas! the prayers of " parents for their children will avail nothing, if they are not " induced to pray for themselves, 'for every one must give an " account of *himself* to God.' I hope, my dear child, you " do not live in the entire neglect of this most important " duty: let me entreat you to attend to it constantly, and " never to begin or end a day without it. Daily entreat the " pardon of your sins, for the sake of the Redeemer, and " earnestly implore the assistance of his grace, to enable you " to resist temptation, and to live in such a manner as shall " prepare you for a blessed immortality. Pray do not ne- " glect, at the same time, to read a portion, longer or shorter, " of the word of God. 'Wherewith shall a young man " cleanse his ways, but by taking heed thereto according to " thy word?'

" I hope, my dear Robert, you will continue in your pre- " sent situation. On the supposition of your doing so (and " I can do nothing better for you), let me entreat you to " make it your constant care to conciliate the esteem of Mr. " C——, which you will certainly do, if you cheerfully com- " ply with his orders, and make his interest your own. No- " thing injures the character of a young man more than " restlessness and fickleness; nothing, on the contrary, se- " cures his credit and comfort like a steady and persevering " attention to the duties of his station. Every situation has " its inconveniences and its difficulties; but time and perse- " verance will surmount the one, and make you almost in- " sensible of the other. The consciousness of having over- 'come difficulties, and combatted trials successfully, will

"afford you, in the issue, a far higher satisfaction than you "can ever hope to obtain by recoiling from them.

"Combat idleness in all its forms; nothing is so destruc- "tive as idle habits, nothing so useful as habits of industry.

* * * * *

"Never demean yourself by contending about trifles; "yield in things of small moment to the inclinations and "humours of your companions. In a word, my dear boy, "make yourself amiable.

"Fear God, and love your fellow-creatures, and be assur- "ed you will find 'Wisdom's ways, ways of pleasantness, "and her paths, paths of peace.'

"To say all in one word, 'If you are wise, my heart shall "rejoice, even mine.'

"I am,
"Your affectionate Father,
"Robert Hall."*

On Mr. Hall's return to Bristol towards the end of October, hopes were entertained that his health was improved, and his strength recruited; but they were only of short duration. The spasmodic affection of the chest occurred with increasing frequency, and in a more alarming character. In one instance, on the first of January 1831, the attack was so severe as to threaten immediate dissolution. It passed off, however, as former attacks had done, on taking blood from the arm; and soon afterwards he returned to spend the remainder of the evening with the friends whom he had left when the paroxysm came on; and, in his usual cheerful and happy spirit, took his ordinary share, and evinced an undiminished interest, in the conversation.

The morning of that day had been signalized by the extraordinary pathos which he imparted to the religious services, at a prayer-meeting, held, according to annual custom, in the vestry at Broadmead. The intensity of his devotional feelings, and the fervour of his supplications in behalf of the assembled congregation; as well as the glowing affection and deep solemnity with which he

* The youth to whom this letter was addressed went abroad soon after the decease of his father, and intelligence of his death was received in the following December.

addressed them, as he reviewed the past dispensations of Providence, and anticipated some of the probable events of the year now opening upon them, both in relation to them and himself, excited the strongest emotion, and, in connexion with the events that immediately followed, made an indelible impression upon their minds; nearly all his subsequent addresses, whether on the Sunday or the week-day evening services, partook, more or less, of the same pathetic and solemnly anticipatory character. One of the most impressive of these, of which many of the congregation retain a vivid recollection, was delivered on the morning of Sunday, January 16th. The text from which he preached was, Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass: and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

In this discourse he seemed to be preparing his people and himself, for that event by which they were to be deprived of their invaluable pastor, and he to be freed from anguish and sorrow! when his soul, liberated from its chain, and clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness, was to go forth, "first into liberty, then into glory."

A highly valued correspondent,* whose communications greatly enrich this work, enables me to present the following summary of Mr. Hall's application or improvement: which, from its occasion, as well as its excellence, cannot but be read with lively interest.

"Improvement. 1. Take no thought, no anxious, dis- "tressing, harassing, thought, for the morrow; suffer not "your minds to be torn asunder by doubt or apprehension. "Consider, rather, what is the *present* will of God, and rest "satisfied and content, without anticipating evils which may "never arrive.

"Do not heighten your present sorrows by a morbid ima- "gination. You know not what a day may bring forth. The "future is likely to be *better* than you expect, as well as "worse. The real victory of Christians arises from *atten- "tion to present duty*. This carries them from strength to "strength.

"Some are alarmed at the thought of death; they say,

* The Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A.M., of Clifton, near Bristol.

'How shall I meet the agonies of dissolution? But when "you are called to die, you will, if among God's children, "receive dying consolation. Be satisfied if you have the 'strength to live to God, and God will support you when 'you come to die. Some fear persecution, lest, at such a 'season, they should 'make shipwreck of faith and of a 'good conscience:' 'As thy day is, such shall thy strength 'be.'

"2. Consider to what it is we owe our success. If we "are nearer our salvation than when we believed, let us not "ascribe it to ourselves, to our own arm, but to the grace of "God: 'Not I, but the grace of God with me,' enabling me "to sustain, and to conquer. If we continue, it is 'because "we have obtained help of God:' we are '*kept* by his mighty "power unto salvation.' In all our sufferings, if Christians, "we are perpetually indebted to divine succour.

"3. Let us habitually look up to God, in the exercise of "faith and prayer. Instead of yielding ourselves to dejec- "tion, let us plead the promises, and flee to the Divine "Word. He has been accustomed to sustain the faithful: "and He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' He "is never weary: Look to Him: 'They that wait on Him "shall mount up with eagles' wings; run, and not be weary, "walk, and not faint.' Go to Him in prayer—cling to His "strength—lay hold of His arm. You have a powerful Re- "deemer: 'be strong in the power of His might!' Draw "down the succours of His grace, which will enable you to "go on, 'from strength to strength,' until you appear before "God in Zion."

It was mercifully ordered, both for Mr. Hall's own comfort, and the gratification and advantage of his flock, that, instead of being long laid aside from public duty (as he sometimes apprehended might be the case), he was enabled to go through the services of the sanctuary almost to the very close of life, without any evident diminution of mental power, and with the benevolent and devotional ardour of spirit which was best calculated, by the divine blessing, to give them their accustomed efficacy. On February 6th, the last Sunday on which he conducted the public worship at Broadmead, he preached two sermons, with the view of enforcing collections in aid of a new chapel that had recently been erected in a part of the city where there was a dense and indigent popu-

lation, for whose religious instruction there had been hitherto no adequate provision. Mr. Hall's own notes of one of those sermons are inserted in the fifth volume. Of the evening sermon I have received an account, which, though it is, avowedly, very imperfect, will, I am persuaded, be regarded as valuable, not only by those whom it will remind of the last instructions of their inestimable pastor, but by many others, who will readily identify the elevated tone of thought and expression of the richly endowed saint, the devoted servant of God, to whose impressive accents they can listen no more.

The text was Luke xii. 15, "*Take heed, and beware of covetousness;*" in considering which Mr. Hall first endeavoured to show in what covetousness consists; and, secondly, to trace its baneful influence. Covetousness, he remarked, consists not in the *possession* of wealth, nor simply in the *desire* to possess it. "A desire to possess "wealth with a view to provide for our wants, and those "of our families who are dependent upon us for support, "if kept within due limits, is not only *not* covetousness, "not criminal, but is natural and right."—"If there "were no desire for wealth, there would be no need of it. "It would soon cease to exist at all; and society would "go back into a state of actual barbarism."—"Cove- "tousness is, properly speaking, the love of money or "other property *for its own sake*, in distinction from the "love of money on account of those necessary things "which it may procure for us." A man may desire money for the purpose of maintaining himself in arms, or for the purpose of extending his pleasures; but in these cases it is subordinate emotion. There is always risk, however, that a subordinate emotion may become a controlling one; and, therefore, if that to which the possession of money is made subsidiary is not absolutely criminal, this tendency of our nature must be carefully guarded against, lest, "by the infatuation of sin, men "should go farther than they at first intend, settle down "into the love of money for its own sake, and indulge "the sordid passion of which our Lord exhorts his dis- "ciples to beware."

In considering the baleful influence of covetousness on the character, Mr. Hall dwelt upon its tendency to harden the heart, to contract the understanding, to diminish the sense of responsibility, to ruin our happiness by cutting us off from the best gratifications of our nature, and rendering man in great measure a solitary being here, while it unfitted him for bliss hereafter.

In speaking of its tendency to harden the heart, he thus expressed himself:

"The claims of benevolence will be perpetually coming "in contact with this vice. It will, consequently, shut up "the heart against all the addresses of pity; and continu- "ally encrust it with the frost of selfishness. Besides, the "direct and positive love of money can never exist alone. "He who desires wealth for its own sake, will be strongly "disposed to injustice. Hence, his integrity will be liable "to perpetual concussions; it will be constantly assailed "by temptation, constantly exposed to injury. The un- "just balance, the defective weight, and the short measure, "will be found in the possession of the covetous man. He "will be ready to take advantage of the weakness or gene- "rosity of those who surround him. These habits of trifling "with integrity will invariably harden the heart. If the "individual be possessed of power, that power will be em- "ployed for bad purposes. If he occupy a station of trust, "that trust will be abused. If, then, any of you trace in "yourselves the commencement of any of these deviations "from rectitude, by reason of the desire of acquisition, "take warning, and abandon the pursuit *at once*, or all the "consequences of which I have spoken will inevitably fol- "low."

In the latter part of the sermon Mr. Hall exhorted his congregation to consider this vice "in connexion "with death and eternity," nearly in the following words:

"No individual of the human family is exempt from death. "It is a debt that all must pay. Death is a most formidable "foe. His power is irresistible—his attack cannot be re- "pelled, nor can we elude his pursuit. Money can give "you no shelter from this terrible adversary. You cannot 'bribe the king of terrors. You cannot purchase a cove-

"nant with the grave. If the bribe were offered it would "be spurned; if the covenant could be made, it would be "broken. Death will strip you of all your possessions. "He will be alike regardless of their glory and their extent.

"Consider, then, how awful is the condition of a covetous "man in relation to futurity! God is the supreme good; "and his favour and service should be esteemed the highest "good and end. But the covetous man makes money his "supreme good, and its acquisition the chief end of his "being. He puts it therefore in the place of God. He "thus becomes an idolater; and in a future world will have "his portion with murderers and liars, 'in the lake that "burneth with fire and brimstone.'

"Now, if there be a word of truth in the New Testa- "ment, some preparation is necessary for a future state. "But what leisure has an avaricious man to prepare for "eternity, when every moment of his time that can be "spared from the seasons allotted to refreshment and re- "pose is occupied in the pursuit of wealth, and the ener- "gies of his mind are entirely bent on its acquisition?

"Can the love of an infinite being have any adequate "place in his bosom? Can there be any true delight in "God, when all his moral perfections are in direct oppo- "sition to this degrading and criminal passion? Can there "be any aspirations after heaven, any sincere desire or "relish for its pleasures and pursuits, or any steady efforts "made to lay up treasure there, when the whole soul is "fixed on the accumulation of riches in the present state? "Can a man love or worship his Maker, when he adores "an earthen idol, and bows down at its feet? Nothing "can be more opposite than these courses of action; and "nothing more contrary to another than the happiness of "heaven and the prevailing love of money. In short, to "use the emphatic and impressive language of Scripture, "'the love of money is the root of all evil.'

"The indulgence of this sinful propensity deprives a man, "not only of present happiness, but of future felicity. Let "me ask, then, most solemnly and affectionately, are there "any covetous persons in the present assembly? Are there "any such here? If so (and you will find no difficulty in "settling this point if you deal faithfully with your own "hearts), then remember that the very earth disowns you, "society expels you from its bosom, enshrouded as you are "in the darkness of your selfishness, the rays of humanity "do not light upon you; much less can the beams of that

"glory in which the Deity resides ever illumine or cheer "your solitary and desolate spirits! You have no hope, un- "less you cease to worship Mammon, and turn in heart and "soul to the true God.

"Remember, that you must shortly appear before the tri- "bunal of that God. There you will have to render your "final account. A God of justice and truth, a Being of "mercy and goodness, will try your actions. When you "stand in his presence you will be divested of all the cir- "cumstances which wealth commands, and appear before "him in the naked simplicity of your moral character. How "unprepared, then, will *you* be to sustain that investigation, "or the scrutiny of his eye, who have made money your "god, and lived and died in the neglect of the blessed and "only Potentate!"

The last service at Broadmead in which Mr. Hall took any part, was the church meeting (when only the members of the church are assembled), on Wednesday, the 9th of February. His closing prayer, on that occasion, is spoken of as most spiritual and elevated, exhibiting in its highest manifestation the peculiar union of humility, benevolence, and fervour, by which his devotional exercises had very long been characterized.

On the next evening, Thursday, the usual monthly sermon, preparatory to the administration of the Lord's Supper, was to have been delivered; but Mr. Hall's discharge of this duty was prevented by a severe attack of the complaint in his chest, which came on just after he had retired to his study to prepare for that service. This was the commencement of the series of paroxysms which terminated in his dissolution.

"Early on the Sunday morning (I again quote one of the letters of my esteemed friend, Mr. Addington,*) being requested to see him, I found him in a condition of extreme suffering and distress. The pain in his back had been uncommonly severe during the whole night, and compelled him to multiply, at very short intervals, the doses of his

* This gentleman, after he had retired from his professional occupations in London, selected Ashley Court, near Bristol, as his residence, that he might enjoy the privilege of Mr. Hall's ministry at Broadmead.

anodyne, until he had taken no less than 125 grains of solid opium, equal to more than 3,000 drops, or nearly four ounces of laudanum!! This was the only instance in which I had ever seen him at all overcome by the soporific quality of the medicine; and it was, even then, hard to determine whether the effect was owing so much to the quantity administered, as to the unusual circumstance of its not having proved, even for a short time, an effectual antagonist to the pain it was expected to relieve.

"Inured as he was to the endurance of pain, and unaccustomed to any strong expression of complaint, he was forced to confess that his present agony was unparalleled by any thing in his former experience. The opium having failed to assuage his pain, he was compelled to remain in the horizontal posture; but whilst in this situation, a violent attack in his chest took place, which, in its turn, rendered an upright position of the body no less indispensable. The struggle that ensued between these opposing and alike urgent demands became most appalling, and it was difficult to imagine that he could survive it; especially as, from the extreme prostration of vital energy, the remedy by which the latter of those affections had often been mitigated, viz. bleeding, could not be resorted to. Powerful stimulants, such as brandy, opium, æther, and ammonia, were the only resources; and in about an hour from my arrival we had the satisfaction of finding him greatly relieved, and expressing his lively gratitude to God.

"The whole of his demeanour throughout this agonizing crisis, as well as during the remainder of the day, a day of much suffering, exhibited, in a striking degree, the efficacy of Christian faith and hope in supporting and tranquillizing the mind of their possessor, in a season of extreme and torturing affliction. His language abounded with expressions at once of the deepest humility and of thankfulness to God for his 'unspeakable mercies,'—together with affectionate acknowledgments of the care and assiduities of his family and friends around him."

From this time the paroxysms increased rapidly both in frequency and severity; and Mr. Hall, in the intervals between their occurrence, was usually so weak and exhausted, as seldom to be able to converse with those around him. His expressions, however, insulated and broken as they often were, proved that he was able fully to exercise that trust in God which is the grand

principle of religion, and that trusting in him, his soul was kept in peace. No murmuring, no language of irritability, escaped from his lips.

It is not my intention to dwell upon the melancholy detail of the ten days previous to his death. I will only record a few such expressions as serve to show that, acute as were his sufferings, God left him not without support.

Thus, when he first announced his apprehension that he should never again minister among his people, he immediately added, "But I am in God's hands, and I "rejoice that I am. I am God's creature, at his dis- "posal for life or death; and that is a great mercy."

Again, "I have not one anxious thought, either for "life or death. What I dread most are dark days. "But I have had none yet: and I hope I shall not have "any."

Again, "I fear pain more than death. If I could "die easily, I think I would rather go than stay; for I "have seen enough of the world, and I have a humble "hope."

On another occasion, a friend having said to him, 'This God will be our God;' he replied, "Yes, he "will,—he will be our guide even unto death."

On recovering from one of his severe paroxysms, he adverted to the affectionate attentions of his beloved wife and daughters, as well as his numerous comforts, and exclaimed—"What a mercy it is to have so many "alleviations! I might have been deprived of all these "comforts;—I might have been in poverty;—I might "have been the most abject wretch on the face of the "earth."

During one night, in which the attacks were a little mitigated in number and severity, he frequently expressed the most lively gratitude to God, as well as his simple, unshaken reliance on his Saviour; and repeated nearly the whole of Robinson's beautiful hymn—

"Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of endless praise!" &c.

The same night, under one of his paroxysms, he said to the friend who was with him, "Why should a living "man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins? "I have not complained, have I, Sir?—and I won't "complain."

When Dr. Prichard was invited to join Mr. Chandler and Mr. Addington in consultation, on his arrival Mr. Hall arose and received him so much in his wonted cordial, courteous manner, as, at the first moment, almost to check the apprehension of danger. On the evening of the same day he expatiated on the mercy of God in bringing him to close his life at Bristol.

His prevailing kindness was evinced throughout, in his solicitude for the comfort of those who sat up with him at night, or who remained in the house, to be called to his assistance, if necessary. He also exhorted the members of his family, and others occasionally present, to make religion the chief, the incessant concern; urging, especially upon some of the young among his friends, the duty of openly professing their attachment to Christ and his cause.

When he was a little recovered from one of his severe paroxysms, 'I asked him (says Mr. Chandler) whether he felt much pain.' He replied that his sufferings were great: "but what (he added) are my sufferings to the sufferings of "Christ? His sufferings were infinitely greater: his suffer- "ings were complicated; God has been very merciful to "me—very merciful: I am a poor creature—an unworthy "creature; but God has been very kind—very merciful." He then alluded to the character of the sufferings of crucifixion, remarking how intense and insufferable they must have been, and asked many minute questions on what I might suppose was the process by which crucifixion brought about death. He particularly inquired respecting the effect of pain, the nervous irritation, the thirst, the oppression of breathing, the disturbance of the circulation, and the hurried action of the heart, till the conversation gradually brought him to a consideration of his own distress; when he again reverted to the lightness of his sufferings when contrasted with those of Christ. He spoke of our Lord's "enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself;" of

the ingratitude and unkindness he received from those for whom he went about doing good; of the combination of the mental and corporeal agonies sustained on the cross; the length of time during which our Lord hung; the exhaustion occasioned, &c. He then remarked how differently he had been situated; that though he had endured as much or more than fell to the lot of most men, yet all had been in mercy. I here remarked to him, that with most persons the days of ease and comfort were far more numerous than those of pain and sorrow. He replied, "But I have been a great sufferer in my time; it is, how-"ever, generally true: the dispensations of God have been "merciful to me." He then observed, that a contemplation of the sufferings of Christ was the best antidote against impatience under any troubles we might experience; and recommended me to reflect much on this subject when in pain or distress, or in expectation of death.*

During the whole of this severe illness he read much in Campbell's translation of the Gospels; and at intervals one of his daughters read to him from this version, his favourite to the last.

On the morning of the 21st, the day on which he died, he had it laid before him, as usual, and read it himself in his ordinary recumbent attitude.

Mrs. Hall, in the course of this morning, remarking to him that he appeared better, and expressing her hopes that he would recover; he replied, "Ah! my "dear, let us *hope* for the best, and *prepare* for the "worst." He then stated his opinion that this day would be critical. When his medical attendants met in consultation, a little after noon, he seemed rather better; and Mr. Chandler left him, between one and two, reclining on the sofa, leaning on his elbow with as much muscular energy as ever.

'Before leaving him (he remarks) I explained to him the plan of proceeding to be observed; on which he bowed, saying, that whatever we wished he would comply with, he would do whatever we desired; begging that he might not interfere with my duties to other patients, and adding that he thought he should be very comfortable till my return.

* Chandler's Authentic Account, p. 28.

'In a very short time, and before I reached home, I was summoned to behold the last agonizing scene of this great and extraordinary man. His difficulty of breathing had suddenly increased to a dreadful and final paroxysm. It seems, this last paroxysm came on more gradually than was usual with those which preceded. Mr. Hall finding his breathing become much worse, first rose more on his elbow, then raised his body, supporting himself with his hand, till the increasing agitation obliged him to rise completely on the sofa, and to place his feet in hot water—the usual means he resorted to for relief in every paroxysm. Mrs. Hall observing a fixation of his eyes, and an unusual expression on his countenance, and indeed in his whole manner, became alarmed by the sudden impression that he was dying; and exclaimed in great agitation, "This can't be dying!" when he replied, "It is death—it is death—death! Oh the suf-"ferings of this body!" Mrs. Hall then asking him, "But are you comfortable in your mind?" he immediately answered, "Very comfortable—very comfortable:" and exclaimed, "Come, Lord Jesus—Come"—He then hesitated, as if incapable of bringing out the last word; and one of his daughters, involuntarily as it were, anticipated him by saying, "Quickly!" on which her departing father gave her a look expressive of the most complacent delight.

'On entering his room, I found him sitting on the sofa, surrounded by his lamenting family; with one foot in hot water, and the other spasmodically grasping the edge of the bath; his frame waving in violent, almost convulsive heavings, sufficiently indicative of the process of dissolution. I hastened, though despairingly, to administer such stimulants as might possibly avert the threatening termination of life; and as I sat by his side for this purpose he threw his arm over my shoulders for support, with a look of evident satisfaction, that I was near him. He said to me, "I am dying: "death is come at last: all will now be useless." As I pressed upon him draughts of stimulants, he intimated that he would take them if I wished; but he believed all was useless. On my asking him if he suffered much, he replied, "Dreadfully." The rapidly increasing gasping soon overpowered his ability to swallow, or to speak, except in monosyllables, few in number, which I could not collect; but, whatever might be the degree of his suffering (and great it must have been), there was no failure of his mental vigour or composure. Indeed, so perfect was his consciousness, that in the midst of these last agonies, he intimated to me

very shortly before the close, with his accustomed courteousness, a fear lest he should fatigue me by his pressure; and when his family, one after another gave way in despair, he followed them with sympathizing looks, as they were obliged to be conveyed from the room. This was his last voluntary movement; for immediately, a general convulsion seized him, and he quickly expired.' *

O! how inconceivably blessed is the change, when, at the moment of utmost agony, the soul enters the regions of endless joy; passes from the land of the dying, to the land of the living; from the society of saints to the blissful presence of the King of Saints, where knowledge, illumination, purity, and love, flow for ever and ever from the Inexhaustible Fountain! Such is the ineffable reward which awaits all the faithful followers of the Lamb. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Nothing, I feel, would be more presumptuous than for me to attempt to portray fully the literary, intellectual, or religious character of my inestimable friend.† I have known, and still know, many whom I greatly value, many whom I cordially love and admire, many from whom I have learnt much and might have learnt more, but for my incapacity to receive what they were ready to impart; but I have known none in whom so many elements of mental and moral greatness were so happily combined as in Mr. Hall; none whose converse and whose diversified knowledge have so constantly interested, charmed, and instructed me; none whose transcendent qualities excited so high and overawing a veneration, yet none, whose humility and cordiality, exquisitely blending with genius and piety, inspired so unhesitating a confidence.

His profound acquaintance with the mind and heart, and his corresponding faculty of tracing and separating

* See Note D. Appendix.

† For some interesting sketches, which together will assist in correctly estimating Mr. Hall's character, see Note E. Appendix.

the springs of human action, gave him an unusual influence with the present race as a sacred orator: while he seems to be one of the few men whose creative intellect, and whose singular ability in the developement of religious truth, and the illustration and confirmation of many principles of universal and increasing interest, qualify them to operate with as extensive an influence in moulding the intellectual and moral character of succeeding generations.

His varied and extraordinary powers, thus diffusively applied to the most momentous subjects, will be seen from his "Works," which are now collected that they may constitute his noblest monument, the most enduring tribute to his memory.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—(See page 61.)

MISCELLANEOUS GLEANINGS FROM MR. HALL'S CONVERSATIONAL REMARKS.

I AM perfectly well aware that no memoranda can convey an adequate idea of the vivacity, originality, and brilliancy of Mr. Hall's conversational powers. It was usually easy to remember the sentiments which he expressed, and sometimes the images, whether sportive or tasteful, by which he illustrated them; but his wit and fancy always lost something of their bloom and freshness on passing through the hands of others, and the beautiful language in which his remarks in conversation were clothed could seldom be recalled, except when he fully communicated his meaning in a very short, but happily turned phrase.

This note, therefore, while it may serve to record some of his sentiments and opinions on interesting topics, must be understood as giving a very faint notion of his manner of expressing himself, except in those cases where the language, at once brief, clear, and characteristic, fixed itself indelibly upon the memory.

The connected series, first presented, has been kindly transmitted by the Rev. Robert Balmer, of Berwick-upon-Tweed, and is selected from his recollection of the substance of three or four conversations which he had with Mr. Hall in the years 1819 and 1823.

In the course of some remarks on various theological writers of our own times, he said, "Dr. Smith is the best "Biblical critic with whom I am personally acquainted; "and I should think him one of the most learned theologians "now alive." On my asking, if he did not consider Archbishop Magee superior in ability, and equal in learning, to Dr. Smith? he replied, with his usual decision, "Not nearly

equal in learning, Sir; I do not suppose that Archbishop Magee knows any thing about the German critics, with "whom Dr. Smith is intimately acquainted, and from whom, 'notwithstanding all their absurdity and impiety, much may "unquestionably be learned. There is one thing," he added, "in Dr. Smith's work much to be lamented; and that is, "the tone of excessive lenity maintained towards his opponents. In consequence of this, his reasonings will not "produce an effect proportioned to their intrinsic force; and "his readers are tempted to regard the opinions which he "refutes with far less horror than they deserve. The proper tone in theological controversy is, I imagine, somewhere between Bishop Horsley's intolerable arrogance "and asperity, and Dr. Smith's unwarrantable softness and "urbanity."

On informing him, that I had been perplexed with doubts as to the extent of the death of Christ, and expressing a wish to know his opinion, he replied, "There, Sir, my sentiments "give me the advantage of you; for on that point I entertain "no doubts whatever: I believe firmly in 'general redemption:' I often preach it, and I consider the fact that "'Christ died for all men' as the only basis that can support the universal offer of the Gospel?"—'But you admit the doctrine of election, which necessarily implies limitation. Do you not think that election and particular redemption are inseparably connected?'—"I believe firmly," he rejoined, "in election, but I do not think it involves particular redemption; I consider the sacrifice of Christ as a remedy, "not only adapted, but intended, for all, and as placing all "in a salvable state; as removing all barriers to their salvation, except such as arise from their own perversity and "depravity. But God knew that none would accept the "remedy, merely of themselves, and therefore, by what may "be regarded as a separate arrangement, he resolved to "glorify his mercy, by effectually applying salvation to a "certain number of our race, through the agency of his "Holy Spirit. I apprehend, then, that the limiting clause "implied in election refers not, to the purchase, but to the "application of redemption." This representation seemed to me at the time to be encumbered with considerable difficulties; and I was not sure that I correctly apprehended it. Not choosing, however, to request Mr. H. to repeat or elucidate his statements, I asked him if he could refer me to any book where I should find what he regarded as the Scripture doctrine on the subject, stated and illustrated. He referred me to a book to which Dr. Smith, of Homerton, had, not many days before, referred, in answer to a similar question: "Bellamy's True Religion Delineated."*

In the course of our conversation respecting the extent of Christ's death, Mr. Hall expatiated at considerable length on the number and variety of the Scripture expressions, in which it seems to be either explicitly asserted or necessarily implied, that it was intended not for the elect exclusively, but for mankind generally, such as "the world," "all," "all men," "every man," &c. He made some striking remarks on the danger of twisting such expressions from their natural and obvious import, and on the absurdity of the interpretations put on them by some of the advocates of particular redemption. He mentioned, especially, the absurdity of explaining "the world," John iii. 16, to signify the elect world, as the text would then teach that some of the elect may not believe. He noticed farther, that the doctrine of general redemption was not only asserted expressly in many texts, but pre-supposed in others, such as "Destroy not with thy meat," &c. and "Denying the Lord that bought them;" and that it was incorporated with other parts of the Christian system, particularly with the universal offers and invitations of the Gospel.

On the question of church government, Mr. H.'s sentiments seemed to me undecided and somewhat inconsistent: and by many they would have been regarded as latitudinarian. He expressed his doubts whether any one form or model was delineated in the New Testament, as obligatory in all ages and in all circumstances;† and said, that he was much

* This work was published in America in 1750, with a recommendation from Jonathan Edwards, and in this country in 1806 (a third edition in 1809) under the recommendation of Mr. Fuller. It is now, I regret to say, out of print.

† Mr. Hall held this sentiment in common with many eminent men of different communions; as Archbishops Cranmer and Whitgift; Bishops Bridges and Stillingfleet; Doctors Cosins, Law, Maclaine; Martin Bucer, Zanchy, Brightman, and Hales; and amongst the congregationalists of the present times, that distinguished biblical scholar, Professor Stuart, of Andover, United States, who, in his admirable reply to Channing on religious liberty, says, "We are *congregationalists*, as we profess to be. We have no prejudices, indeed, against the presbyterian or other forms of church government which our brethren of orthodox denominations in this commonwealth, or in any part of our country, see fit to adopt. It is our belief that the gospel has not *prescribed exclusively* any particular form of church government; but that this is left to expediency, as times and circumstances may require."

If this were universally admitted, how much would the true unity of

disposed to adopt the maxim, "Whatever is best administered is best." In another conversation, when mention was made of a church, which, along with its minister, had been guilty of a scandalous irregularity in a matter of discipline, I stated what would be done in such circumstances among Presbyterians, and put the question, Will the neighbouring churches and ministers not interfere? Mr. H. intimated that they ought to remonstrate and advise; but that any claim to jurisdiction would, in his apprehension, be altogether unwarrantable; adding that the independence of churches appeared to him a principle expressly sanctioned by the word of God.

With regard to the question of "Terms of Communion," we had repeated conversations. On this subject he spoke with uncommon interest and animation; and seemed surprised at the arguments of those who were opposed to his views. I recollect, in particular, the effect produced on him, when I stated that I had heard Dr. Lawson, of Selkirk, a man eminent for talents and piety, and still more eminent for his humility and sanctity, declare that he would not admit a Roman Catholic, not even Fenelon or Pascal, to the table of the Lord. Mr. H., who had been previously reclining on three chairs, instantly raised himself on his elbow, and spoke without intermission and with great rapidity for nearly a quarter of an hour; expatiating on the amazing absurdity and presumption of rejecting those whom Christ receives, and of refusing to hold communion on earth with those with whom we hope to associate in heaven. During all this time his manner was exceedingly vehement, his other arm was in continual motion, and his eyes, naturally most piercing, were lighted up with unusual brilliancy.

It was interesting and amusing to observe how Mr. Hall's exquisite sensibility to literary beauty, intermingled with, and qualified the operation of his principles and leanings, both as a Christian and a Dissenter. Of this, I recollect various instances; but shall give only one. While conversing respecting Archbishop Magee, his talents, sentiment, conduct, &c., I quoted, as a proof of his high-church principles, a remark from a charge then newly published: it was to this effect: That the Roman Catholics have a church without a religion; the Dissenters have a religion without

the church, notwithstanding diversity of sentiment on minor points, be promoted, and with it the universal diffusion and reception of Christian truth! See John xvii. 21. 23.

a church; but the Establishment has both a church and a religion. Mr. Hall had never heard the remark before, and was exceedingly struck with it. "That, Sir," he exclaimed, smiling, "is a beautiful saying. I have not heard so fine an "observation for a long time. It is admirable, Sir." 'You admire it, I presume, for its point, not for its truth.' *H.* "I admire it, Sir, for its plausibility and cleverness. It is "false, and yet it seems to contain a mass of truth. It is an "excellent stone for a churchman to pelt with."

After speaking of Antinomians, of whom it appeared there were then several in the neighbourhood of Leicester: "Pray, "Sir," said he, "have you got any Antinomians in Scotland?" 'None,' I replied, 'who avow themselves such. There are individuals in our congregations who have what I consider a morbid aversion to practical preaching, and to a minute enforcement of duty; but almost all our people who know and care any thing about religion will tell you that, although the believer is delivered from the law as a covenant of works, he is subject to it as a rule of life.' "That," said Mr. H., "is precisely what I expected. Your ministers and your "people have too much information to be ensnared by such "impieties. Antinomianism is a monster which can live "only in darkness; bring light on it and it expires."

The following opinions were expressed by Mr. H. respecting various writers in theology. I give them in the form of a dialogue, inserting, of course, such questions and remarks of my own as led to his observations. Let it be remembered at the same time, that they are only fragments, as, in many instances, I do not now recollect more than a third or fourth part of what was said.

B. 'May I ask, Sir, what writers you would most recommend to a young minister.' *H.* "Why, Sir, I feel very in-"competent to give directions on that head; I can only say "that I have learned far more from John Howe than from "any other author I ever read. There is an astonishing "magnificence in his conceptions. He had not the same "perception of the beautiful as of the sublime; and hence "his endless subdivisions." *B.* 'That was the fault of his age.' *H.* "In part, Sir; but he has more of it than many "of the writers of that period; than Barrow, for example, "who was somewhat earlier. There was, I think, an innate "inaptitude in Howe's mind for discerning minute graces "and proprieties, and hence his sentences are often long and "cumbersome. Still he was unquestionably the greatest of "the puritan divines."

After adverting to several of Howe's works, Mr. H. said, in reference to his 'Blessedness of the Righteous:' "Perhaps, Baxter's 'Saint's Rest' is fitted to make a deeper "impression on the majority of readers. Baxter enforces a "particular idea with extraordinary clearness, force, and "earnestness. His appeals to the conscience are irresistible. Howe, again, is distinguished by calmness, self-possession, majesty, and comprehensiveness; and, for my own "part, I decidedly prefer him to Baxter. I admire, exceedingly, his 'Living Temple,' his sermon on the 'Redeemer's "Tears,' &c.; but in my opinion, the best thing he ever "wrote, is his defence of the sincerity of the Gospel offer. "I refer to the treatise called, the 'Reconcilableness of God's "Prescience of the Sins of Men, with his Counsels, Exhortations, and whatever other Means he used to prevent them.' "This I regard as the most profound, the most philosophical, and the most valuable of all Howe's writings."

B. 'Do you think highly of Dr. Owen?' *H.* "No, Sir, "by no means. Have *you* read much of Owen, Sir; do "you admire him?" *B.* 'I have read his preliminary Exercitations to his great work on the Hebrews; his exposition of particular verses here and there; his book on church government; and some of his smaller treatises. I do not greatly admire him, nor have I learned much from him.' *H.* "You "astonish me, Sir, by your patience. You have accomplished a Herculean undertaking in reading Owen's Preliminary Exercitations. To me it is intolerably heavy and "prolix." *B.* 'I do think, Sir, there are many valuable ideas in his writings; but, as a reasoner, he seems to me singularly illogical; for he often takes for granted the thing to be proved.' *H.* "I quite concur with the latter part of your "statement. As a reasoner, Dr. Owen is most illogical; for "he almost always takes for granted what he ought to prove; "while he is always proving what he ought to take for granted; and after a long digression, he concludes very properly "with, 'This is not our concernment,' and returns to enter "on something still farther from the point."

I remarked that Jonathan Edwards's theory was opposed to our consciousness and our indestructible feelings; for whenever we blamed ourselves for having acted wrong, we had an irresistible belief, not only that we could have acted otherwise, if we had chosen, but that we could have willed otherwise. To all this Mr. H. readily assented, adding some remarks respecting two of Edwards's distinctions: the distinction between liberty to will, and liberty to act according to our will; and that between natural and moral necessity. Respecting the one of these, (I do not precisely remember which,) Mr. H. made the following ludicrous but characteristic observations:

"That distinction, Sir, lies at the basis of Edwards's "theory; but it is not original. It is to be found in the "works of Dr. Owen: I think it certain that Edwards found "it there, buried, like the rest of Owen's ideas, amid a heap "of rubbish; and finding it there, he did what Owen had "not strength of arm to do, took it by the tail, and dragged "it into light. It proved a monster, and ought to have been "smothered; but Edwards found it would be useful to "frighten the enemies of divine sovereignty and free grace, "and therefore, instead of smothering it, he nursed it."

Mr. Hall made some inquiry respecting Dr. Henry, the historian, once a minister in Berwick, and afterwards colleague of Dr. Macknight, the commentator, in one of the churches in Edinburgh: I informed him that, from all I had ever heard, I believed Dr. Henry must have been a very dry and uninteresting preacher. This led to a reference to the well-known anecdote relative to these two individuals; according to which, the one, when coming to church on a Sabbath morning, having got his clothes wet by a heavy rain, asked his colleague to officiate for him. "Go into the pulpit," said the other, "and you will be dry enough." Some doubt being expressed which of the two it was, to whom this remark was made, Mr. H. observed, "I suppose, Sir, it was applicable to both." Immediately checking himself, he added, "And yet, I should think, that to an intellectual audience, an audience that had any relish for Scripture exposition, Macknight must have been interesting, if "the discourses which he preached resembled his published "writings." 'Pray, Sir,' I said, 'do you admire Macknight as a commentator?' "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I do very "much; I think it would be exceedingly difficult indeed, to "come after him in expounding the apostolic epistles. I "admit, at the same time, that he has grievous deficiencies: "there is a lamentable want of spirituality and elevation "about him. He never sets his foot in the other world if "he can get a hole to step into in this; and he never gives "a passage a meaning which would render it applicable and "useful in all ages, if he can find in it any local or temporary allusion. He makes fearful havoc, Sir, of the text on "which you preached to-day. His exposition of it is inimitably absurd." The text referred to was Ephesians i. 8.

" Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence ;" and the " wisdom and prudence" are explained by Macknight, not of the wisdom of God, as displayed in the scheme of redemption, but of the wisdom and prudence granted to the apostles to enable them to discharge their office.

Mr. Hall repeatedly referred to Dr. ———, and always in terms of great esteem as well as high admiration of his general character; exercising, however, his usual free and independent judgement. The following are some remarks respecting that extraordinary individual: " Pray, Sir, did " you ever know any man who had that singular faculty of " repetition possessed by Dr. ——? Why, Sir, he often re- " iterates the same thing ten or twelve times in the course " of a few pages. Even Burke himself had not so much of " that peculiarity. His mind resembles that optical instru- " ment lately invented; what do you call it?" *B.* ' You mean, I presume, the kaleidoscope.' *H.* " Yes, Sir; an idea " thrown into his mind is just as if thrown into a kaleido- " scope. Every turn presents the object in a new and beau- " tiful form; but the object presented is still the same. Have " you not been struck, Sir, with the degree in which Dr. " —— possesses this faculty?" ' Do you not think, Sir,' I replied, ' that he has either far too much of this faculty, or that he indulges it to a faulty excess?' *H.* " Yes, Sir, certainly; " his mind seems to move on hinges, not on wheels. There " is incessant motion, but no progress. When he was at " Leicester, he preached a most admirable sermon, on the " necessity of immediate repentance; but there were only " two ideas in it, and on these his mind revolved as on a " pivot.

On metaphysics and moral philosophy, we talked at great length; but I cannot now give a tolerable specimen of his acute and eloquent remarks. One of his observations, however, I do remember, which struck me at the time as exceedingly just and happy. Much had been said respecting the utility or inutility of metaphysical studies, and respecting the fact that they as yet had led to no useful discoveries. I made some such remark as this, that, admitting such studies did not terminate in profitable discoveries, still they were advantageous as a field for cultivating and invigorating the mental powers. Mr. H. said, " An *arena*, not a *field*. " Metaphysics yield no fruit. They are not a field, they are " only an arena, to which a man who has got nothing to do, " may go down sometimes, and try his skill in intellectual

" gladiatorship. This, at present, is their chief recommen- " dation."

Of the literary characters respecting whom we conversed, there was none whom he praised so highly as his friend Sir James Mackintosh, and the following fragments will convey some idea of Mr. Hall's estimate of that distinguished and lamented person. " I know no man," he said repeatedly and emphatically, " equal to Sir James in talents. The " powers of his mind are admirably balanced. He is defective " only in imagination." At this last statement, I expressed my surprise, remarking that I never could have suspected that the author of the eloquent oration for Peltier was deficient in fancy. " Well, Sir," said Mr. H., " I don't wonder " at your remark. The truth is, he has imagination too, but, " with him, imagination is an acquisition rather than a " faculty. He has, however, plenty of embellishment at " command; for his memory retains every thing. His mind " is a spacious repository hung round with beautiful images, " and when he wants one he has nothing to do but reach " up his hand to a peg, and take it down. But his images " were not manufactured in his mind; they were imported." *B.* ' If he be so defective in imagination he must be incompetent to describe scenes and delineate characters vividly and graphically; and I should apprehend, therefore, he will not succeed in writing history.' *H.* " Sir, I do not expect " him to produce an eloquent or interesting history. He " has, I fear, mistaken his province. His genius is best " adapted for metaphysical speculation; but had he chosen " moral philosophy, he would probably have surpassed every " living writer." *B.* ' I admired exceedingly some of his philosophical papers in the Edinburgh Review, his articles, for instance, on Madame de Staël's Germany, and on Dugald Stewart's Preliminary Dissertation; but there seemed to me a heaviness about them, and I do think that Mr. Jeffrey could expound a metaphysical theory with more vivacity and effect.' *H.* " With more vivacity perhaps, but not with " equal judgement or acuteness. He would not go so deep, " Sir; I am persuaded that if Sir James Mackintosh had " enjoyed leisure, and had exerted himself, he would have " completely outdone Jeffrey and Stewart, and all the me- " taphysical writers of our times."

Of Dugald Stewart Mr. H. spoke slightingly; and it seemed to me that he was somewhat prejudiced against that amiable and accomplished philosopher, in consequence of unfavourable reports which had reached him respecting

Mr. Stewart's religious sentiments. "He is," said Mr. H., "a pleasing, but a feeble writer. I would never compare "him with any of our great metaphysicians; with Mal- "branche, or Locke, or Berkeley, or even with Tucker. "Reid had a more vigorous and original mind than Stewart; "and Campbell, I suspect, was superior to both. If Camp- "bell had devoted his attention to mental philosophy, he "could have done all that Reid or Stewart had accom- "plished; but neither of them could have written the 'Pre- "liminary Dissertations' to his work on the Gospels. There "is also too much egotism and parade about Dugald Stewart. "He is always polishing away at the corner of a subject; "but he could not rear a system of his own."

This comparison Mr. Hall followed out at considerable length, and in language exceedingly beautiful and magnificent; which, however, I cannot now recall. With regard to Stewart's style, Mr. H. observed, "That it was unques- "tionably one of the finest philosophical styles that ever "was written; that Mr. S. had carried embellishment farther "into the region of metaphysics than any other author that "had preceded him; and that his embellishment was inva- "riably consistent with perfect sobriety of taste."

Of Dr. Thomas Brown, Mr. Hall observed, "That he was "a man of more genius, but less judgement, than his prede- "cessor; that his style, with all its beauties, was far inferior "to Stewart's, as a vehicle for philosophical speculation; that "it was deficient in clearness and precision; and so ex- "ceedingly diffuse, that all that was valuable in the four "volumes of his lectures might be condensed into one." I remarked that Dr. Brown was often the victim of his own ingenuity; that, in point of candour, he was immeasurably inferior to Stewart; that the former would never agree with any writer, if he could possibly differ from him, and that the latter would never differ from any one, if he could possibly agree with him. Mr. Hall acquiesced in substance in these remarks, and proceeded to comment on Dr. B.'s amazing boldness and originality. He characterised briefly several of his lectures, stating that those which had most deeply interested him, and which he thought among the best, were the "Lectures on the Immateriality and Immortality of the Soul."

Mr. H. mentioned that he had read a considerable portion of Kant's works. On my remarking that I knew nothing of that philosopher, except from Dr. Thomas Brown's article upon him, in an early number of the Edinburgh Review, and

from Madame de Staël's book on Germany; that I should suppose his writings to be utterly unintelligible and uninteresting; Mr. H. replied, "It is certainly no great loss to "be ignorant of Kant's works. His philosophy is a system "of scepticism." In answer to his question, "whether I had "read much of Madame de Staël's works," I informed him that I had read her "Remarks on Rousseau," one of her novels, and her book on Germany. *H.* "Did you read her "book on Germany from beginning to end?" *B.* 'I did.' *H.* "I admire your patience more and more, Sir." He added that he had looked into Madame de Staël's Germany; that on finding some philosopher, a well-known idealist, (I cannot at this moment recollect who it was,) spoken of as an opponent to the ideal theory, he had thrown aside the book in disgust; supposing that very little could be learned from a writer so ill informed as to be capable of such a blunder. He seemed very reluctant to allow that many of her remarks were acute and ingenious; and when something was said about the flights of her fancy, he said, "that, for "his part, he could not admire her flights, for to him she "was generally invisible; not because she ascended to a "great height above the earth, but because she invariably "selected a foggy atmosphere."

To the preceding selections from Mr. Balmer's communication, may be added a few of Mr. Hall's remarks, rapidly thrown off on various occasions, some occurring in my own hearing, others taken from the letters of different friends. It may be scarcely necessary to observe that I have not been guided, in my selection, by a desire to exhibit sentiments that coincide with my own, but by a desire still farther to illustrate Mr. Hall's character and manner.

On the return of the Bourbons to France, in 1814, a gentleman called upon Mr. Hall, in the expectation that he would express himself in terms of the utmost delight on account of that signal event. Mr. Hall said, "I am sorry for "it, Sir. The cause of knowledge, science, freedom, and "pure religion, on the Continent, will be thrown back half "a century; the intrigues of the Jesuits will be revived; "and popery will be resumed in France with all its mum- "mery, but with no power, except the power of persecu- "tion." This opinion was expressed about six weeks before the issuing of the Pope's bull for the revival of the order of Jesuits in Europe, 7th August, 1814.

A few years afterwards, Mr. Hall, on an allusion being made to the battle of Waterloo, remarked, " I have scarcely " thought of the unfulfilled prophecies since that event. It " overturned all the interpretations which had been pre- " viously advanced by those who had been thought sound " theologians, and gave new energy to the Pope and the " Jesuits, both of whom seemed rapidly coming to nothing, " as the predictions were understood to teach. That battle, " and its results, appeared to me to put back the clock of " the world six degrees."

Notwithstanding his decided sentiments as a whig and a reformer, he manifested through life a reverence for ancient institutions, rank, and illustrious descent. He was present in Westminster Abbey at Handel's Commemoration, and saw the King (George III.) stand up in one part of the performance of the Messiah, shedding tears. Nothing, he said, had ever affected him more strongly. " It seemed like a great act of national assent to the fundamental truths of religion." He was most accurately acquainted with the descents and dependencies of our principal noble families.

A gentleman expressed his surprise that a celebrated political character, who had avowed *frequent* changes of sentiment, should be so much admired, as he had no principle. Mr. Hall replied, " Why, Sir, probably that is the very rea- " son he is so much admired. He is a conscientious rogue ; " that is, he makes a conscience of being a rogue ; he is a " rogue upon principle, *for he makes it a principle to have no* " *principle.*"

" The most effective speaker I ever heard was Dunning. " His voice was unpleasant ; but the clearness and force of " the thought and expression produced an effect not to be " surpassed."—' Did you ever hear Fox speak ?'—" Yes, " Sir, and his eloquence was wonderfully fine."—' How did it affect you, Sir ?'—" As I suppose that of Demosthenes " would : his words were like darts of fire."

Junius's Letters were mentioned. After much speculation as to the author, from various persons, some one cited Dr. Johnson's remark, that none except Edmund Burke could have written them. Mr. Hall remarked—" Burke cer- " tainly could *not* have written them. The style of the two " authors is too opposite for any one to believe them iden- " tical. The talent of Junius shows itself in condensation " and brevity : Burke's *forte* is amplification. Junius is " cool and deliberate : Burke was impassioned and ener- " getic. Junius is remarkable for his caustic satire : Burke,

" for rampant and vehement abuse. The diction of Burke " is modern and latinized ; while the writings of Junius " afford a singular illustration of the excellence and force of " the original English language :—he employs no latinized " words, and has exhibited a full and most forcible style, " composed almost entirely of words of Saxon derivation. " The man who could write as Burke did, could not so dis- " guise his style as to bring it into any continued similarity " to that of Junius. The character of the men, too, was " essentially different : there is no generosity in Junius. " His caustic satire was, in character, like that of Horne " Tooke, whose very calmness was irresistible ; yet no think- " ing man identifies Junius with Tooke."

In conversation about thirty years ago, an acute, but bitter-spirited political writer being mentioned, Mr. Hall was asked if he had ever noticed the singularly conical formation of that writer's head ? " Yes, Sir," he replied, " it " is a remarkable head in its structure, very remarkable ; " but what a *face*, Sir ! Did you ever see another such a " face ? *It is the rendezvous of all the vices, Sir.*"

On being asked if he had read the life of Bishop Watson, then (in 1818) recently published, he replied that he had, and regretted it, as it had lowered his estimate of the bishop's character. Being asked, why ? he expressed his reluctance to enlarge upon the subject ; but added, " Poor man, I " pity him ! He married public virtue in his early days, " but seemed for ever afterwards to be quarrelling with his " wife."

A clergyman, who had just before been at one of the late Archbishop of Canterbury's public dinners, at Lambeth, mentioned that the Archbishop's chaplain " said grace" both before and after dinner. Mr. Hall observed that " it must " have been a very gratifying mark of respect to the chap- " lain, when sitting at the same table.' ' You are under a mistake,' said the clergyman, ' the chaplain did not dine at the same table, but in another room, from which he was called in twice, to say grace.' Mr. Hall, after using two or three terms of astonishment, which I cannot now recall, added—" So that is being great ! His Grace, not choosing " to present his own requests to the King of kings, calls in a " deputy to take up his messages. A great man, indeed ! " A very great man !" *

* This anecdote, which has been preserved simply as an additional example of Mr. Hall's manner of dismissing an unbecoming practice, on which he did not wish to dwell, by a few ironical expressions,

Hearing of a person whose property had rapidly wasted, and who had concealed the state of his affairs from his family, which had from mere ignorance been subjected to great inconvenience:—"Concealment, Sir," Mr. Hall replied, "has ruined thousands. A reserved man, Sir, misses it in "his actions; an open man in his words. Ruin is inevita- "ble in the first case, and often risked in the second."

"In matters of conscience *first* thoughts are best; in "matters of prudence *last* thoughts are best."

On being informed that a lady when asked to subscribe to a certain charitable institution, said 'she would wait and see,' Mr. Hall said "that is not 'watching to do good,' but watching to escape from it."

"The head of Mr. ———, (a neighbouring minister,) is "so full of everything but religion, that it seems difficult to "account for his continuing to preach: one might be tempt- "ed to fancy that he has a Sunday soul, which he screws "on in due time, and takes off again every Monday morn- "ing."

'What do you think, Sir, of Tom Paine's attack upon the Bible?' "I think it as ineffably weak and ridiculous as it "would be for a mouse to attempt to nibble off the wing of "an archangel."

'What do you think of the Ranters, Mr. Hall? Don't you think they ought to be put down?' "I don't know "enough of their conduct to say that. What do they do? "Do they inculcate Antinomianism, or do they exhibit im- "morality in their lives?" 'Not that I know of; but they fall into very irregular practices.' "Indeed! what prac- "tices?" 'Why, Sir, when they enter a village, they begin to sing hymns, and they go on singing until they collect a number of people about them, on the village green, or in some neighbouring field, and then they preach. "Well; "whether that may be *prudent* or *expedient*, or not, depends "upon circumstances; but, as yet, I see no criminality." 'But you *must* admit, Mr. Hall, that it is *very irregular*.' "And suppose I do admit that, what follows? Was not "our Lord's rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees, and driving "the buyers and sellers out of the temple, *very irregular*?

seems to be regarded, by a writer in the Christian Observer (*Nov.* 1833), as a very inconsiderate attack, not resting in fact, upon the heads of the Anglican church. To this I simply reply that before I published the anecdote I ascertained the existence of the practice, by inquiry of several clergymen, all of whom admitted it, and some condemning it, while others defended it as only a proper ceremonial on state occasions.

"Was not almost all that he did in his public ministry *very* "*irregular*? Was not the course of the Apostles and of "Stephen, and of many of the Evangelists, *very irregular*? "Were not the proceedings of Calvin, Luther, and of their 'fellow-workers in the Reformation, *very irregular*?—a "complete and shocking innovation upon all the quiescent "doings of the papists? And were not the whole lives of "Whitfield and Wesley *very irregular* lives, as you view "such things? Yet how infinitely is the world indebted to "all of these? No, Sir: there must be something widely "different from mere irregularity before I can condemn."

Mr. Hall, being asked his opinion of the French popular preachers, said, "Many of them have great talent; but they "are all too rhetorical and artificial, and artifice in the pul- "pit is most odious." 'What is your opinion, Sir, of Saurin?' "He is decidedly inferior to Massillon and Bossuet, "both in the general structure of his sermons, and in all the "higher flights of oratory. His sermons are too fine, have "too much display, and scarcely ever give due prominence "to 'Christ and the Cross.' A *page* of Pascal's thoughts, "is worth more in my estimation than a *volume* of Saurin's "Sermons."

"The scheme may not seem at first sight to promise much "success; but in my opinion, Missionary Societies should 'be formed in churches; every church, possessing the 'means, should feel itself bound, not merely to maintain "religious teaching and worship internally, but, also, *as a* "*church*, to promote the dissemination of religion around. "I think that a church ought to maintain not only a pastor "for itself; but, at the same time, an evangelist to preach "the gospel where it is not known. This would in a few "years, banish heathenism from christian countries, teach "us the best mode of attacking it in foreign countries, and "would be promoting religion in a religious way."

Being led to speak of Mrs. Hannah More, he said, "Her 'style in early life was always suited to the subject and to "the occasion; as in her Thoughts on the Manners of the "Great, and her Cheap Repository Tracts; and her writings "have, doubtless, done much good. But in her later works "her style has become exceedingly faulty: it exhibits a "constant affectation of point. She fatigues one with per- "petual antithesis, and that, not of ideas, but of words. I "consider Miss Edgeworth's style as far superior. She is "simple and elegant; content to convey her thoughts in "their most plain and natural form. This is, indeed, the

" perfection of style. As that piece of glass is the most " perfect, through which objects are seen so clearly, that the " medium, the glass itself, is not perceived; so, that style is " most perfect which makes itself forgotten. Such is the ' character of Miss Edgeworth's style."

He was asked his opinion of the moral tendency of Miss Edgeworth's works. "In point of tendency, I should class ' her writings among the most irreligious I ever read. Not " from any desire she evinces to do mischief, or to unsettle ' the mind, like some of the insidious infidels of the last cen- " tury; not so much from any direct attack she makes upon " religion, as from a universal and studied omission of the " subject. In her writings a very high strain of morality is " assumed: she delineates the most virtuous characters, and " represents them in the most affecting circumstances of " life,—in sickness, in distress, even in the immediate pros- " pect of eternity, and finally sends them off the stage with " their virtue unsullied:—and all this without the remotest " allusion to Christianity, the only true religion. Thus, she " does not attack religion, or inveigh against it, but makes ' it appear unnecessary, by exhibiting perfect virtue without " it. No works ever produced so bad an effect on my own " mind as hers. I did not expect any irreligion there: I was " off my guard; their moral character beguiled me; I read " volume after volume with eagerness, and the evil effect of " them I experienced for weeks. I have been told that she " was once asked her motive for delineating a merely ideal " morality without reference to religion. She replied, that " if she had written for the lower classes she should have " recommended religion; but that she wrote for a class for " whom this was less necessary. She seemed to think that " the virtues of the higher orders of society were so exalted " as to need no assistance from religion, which was only de- " signed as a curb or muzzle for the lower brutes who could " not be managed without it. Happily for the world, Mrs. " More never fell into that grievous mistake."

Some questions were asked of him as to Mrs. More's conversation. He said, "So far as I can judge, she talks but " little on ordinary occasions; and when she speaks, it is " generally to utter some sententious remark." A lady pre- " sent inquired, if there was anything particularly *striking* in Mrs. More's manners. "Nothing striking, Ma'am, cer- " tainly not. Her manners are too perfectly proper to be " striking. *Striking* manners are *bad* manners you know, " Ma'am. She is a perfect lady, and studiously avoids those

" peculiarities and eccentricities which constitute striking " manners."

More than once have I heard him, with affectionate respect, mention Dr. Ryder, the bishop of Lichfield, whom he had known as a pious and useful parish clergyman in the neighbourhood of Leicester. "He has not been injured," said Mr. Hall, "by promotion; he is the same man as a " bishop, that he was as the laborious parish priest; to such " a bishop we may apply the apocalyptic title, ' an angel of " the church.' We may say of him what St. John says of " Demetrius, that he ' has good report of all men, and of the " truth itself.' "

' What did you think, Sir, of Mr. Scott's Reply to Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism?' "I thought it com- " plete in its kind. He razed the bishop's arguments to " their very foundations; and would have ploughed over " them, so that no vestige of them should afterwards be dis- " covered, had not he found something better to do."

' What is your opinion of his Commentary?' "Mr. Ful- " ler used to say that it had more of *the mind of the Spirit* " than any other; and though I cannot go quite so far as " that, I think it very valuable as a book of reference, free " from fancies, and abounding with good sense and sound " instruction. Matthew Henry's has more genius and beau- " ty, and is very popular and delightful for daily reading." ' But is not Scott's prolix?' "It may be so. Yet I cannot " say I ever found it so. There is no display in it; and " that always has a great charm with me." ' But you seem inclined to admit that it is void of taste, if not rude in struc- ture.' "Why, as to that, Mr. Scott set before you fine " blocks of marble. He did not stop to polish any of them, " or to chisel them down into ornamental forms, but went " off again to the quarry to hew out another block."

He did not like Dr. Gill as an author. When Mr. Christmas Evans was in Bristol, he was talking to Mr. Hall about the Welsh language, which he said was very copious and expressive. ' How I wish, Mr. Hall, that Dr. Gill's works had been written in Welsh.' "I wish they had, Sir; I wish " they had, with all my heart; for then I should never have " read them. They are a continent of mud, Sir."

" Jonathan Edwards unites comprehensiveness of view, " with minuteness of investigation, beyond any writer I am " acquainted with. He was the greatest of the sons of " men. He has none of the graces of writing, I admit: he " was acquainted with no *grace*, but *divine*."

A gentleman, speaking of the late Andrew Fuller, remarked that though he had written very strongly against Ultra-Calvinism, he had scarcely ever heard him exhort sinners with any degree of earnestness from the pulpit. Mr. Hall observed, that when he *did* make appeals of the kind adverted to, they were so deeply impressive as to excite regret that they were not more frequent. 'How do you account, Sir, for their occurring so seldom?' Mr. Hall seemed disinclined to enter seriously upon the subject; but replied, "Why, Sir, I suppose that occasionally he had to struggle "with the feelings of an assassin. He knew that he had "murdered Antinomianism, and at such times he was haunted by its ghost."

A popular divine being engaged to preach at Bristol, Mr. Hall intended to hear him, but was prevented by indisposition. A gentleman, however, who had attended the service, called upon Mr. Hall in his way home, and told him he had been greatly delighted and edified. "I have no doubt "of that, Sir (said Mr. Hall); but pray what was the doc-"tor's text?" 'It was Heb. ii. 3: *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*' "A very fine subject, Sir; "how did the doctor treat it?" 'Why, Sir, he began by saying he should consider, first, Why it was called a *great* salvation? And, in the first place, it was called a *great* salvation because *God was the Author of it.*' "Impossible, "Sir, impossible! You must have misunderstood the doc-"tor, Sir; he could not have said that, Sir. God is the Au-"thor of the minutest and meanest insects: He is the Author "*even of a flea*, you know, Sir."

John Wesley having been mentioned, he said, "The most "extraordinary thing about him was, that while he set all in "motion, he was himself perfectly calm and phlegmatic: "he was the quiescence of turbulence."

He spoke of Whitfield as presenting a contrast in the mediocrity of his writings to the wonderful power of his preaching: of the latter there could be no doubt, however; but it was of a kind not to be represented in writing; "it is im-"possible to paint eloquence."

Speaking of Mr. ——'s composition: "Yes, it is very "elegant, but very cold; it is the beauty of frost."

Some one observing to Mr. Hall that his animation increased with his years—"Indeed: then I am like touch-"wood; the more decayed, the easier fired."

In 1829 I lent Mr. Hall the volume, then just published, entitled, "The Natural History of Enthusiasm." I had expected that he would be delighted by so acute and original an essay. But he disappointed me here. On my inquiring how he liked it; "Not much, Sir," he answered. 'Why, Sir, it is considered a very clever book.' "Oh, yes, Sir, it is "clever enough in its way; but there is no *repose* in it: I "found it only fret and harass my mind to read much of it. "The style is not natural to the author, but is assumed, I "suspect, to keep up his disguise; and there is, in conse-"quence, a want of clearness in it, as well as in the train of "thought. The author does not *settle* my mind. He is right, "however, in his definition of enthusiasm, as a word which "is now always to be taken in a bad sense, as denoting an "*extravagant* view of the subject.

'Have you read Pollok's Course of Time, Mr. Hall?' "Only some portions of it, Sir. It is not at all to my taste. "The author's age and circumstances excite sympathy, but "that should not be confounded with admiration." 'But some of the reviewers, Sir, compare Pollok with Milton.' "I have no patience with such absurdity. Pollok is no "more to be compared with Milton than the manners of a "clown with those of a prince."

Lord Byron was mentioned. "I tried to read Childe "Harold, but could not get on, and gave it up."—'Have you read the fourth canto, Sir, which is by far the best?' "Oh no, Sir, I shall never think of trying." 'But, Sir, independently of the mere poetry, it must be interesting to contemplate such a remarkable mind as Lord Byron's.' "It "is well enough to have a general acquaintance with such "a character; but I know not why we should take plea-"sure in minutely investigating deformity."

In reply to some observations from a gentleman who had erroneously inferred the inutility of all forms and modes of religious worship, from the fact that worship too often sunk into mere formality, Mr. Hall expressed himself nearly as follows:—

"You seem to think, Sir, because we often see the form "of religion without the power, that it would be better to "be without forms altogether. But that is a great mistake. "Where there is a power there *will be* a form: and while "we are in the present embodied state religion requires a "form, a something by which it may become visible to "others, and so extend its influence. Every state of mind, "you know, Sir, shows itself. Gratitude shows itself in "the language and actions of praise; benevolence in out-"ward acts of kindness; affection in indications of love;

" a thirst for knowledge by search and inquiry; and in all " these, and many others, while the soul remains in the " body, the eye, the tongue, the voice, the hand, the body " indeed, must be the minister of its actions. Besides, Sir, " as we are by our very constitution social creatures, our " principles and our feelings must exhibit themselves in our " social intercourse, must assume a social *form;* and so, " therefore, must our *religious* principles and feelings. In " all deep and strong feeling we naturally seek participants, " and its outward form manifests its existence. So if reli- " gion have a principle in society, it must, it will, take an " outward form; and public worship becomes necessary, " that they who fear God may give evidence of that fear, " by frequenting the holy assembly. No, Sir; the public " ceremonial of religion may degenerate into mere pom- " posity and pageantry, or may fail in its object, from ap- " pealing to the senses instead of the understanding and " the heart; it may bewilder by its complexity, or fatigue " by its length; but this only serves to show that the best " things are liable to abuse and perversion. Forms are ne- " cessary, notwithstanding; and they most fully answer " their purpose, as means of grace (for such they really " are), when they are constructed with a direct view to our " nature as men, and our wants as Christians."

NOTE B.—[See page 77.]

Quotations from the Writings of Sir James Mackintosh and Dr. Parr, relative to Mr. Hall.

1. *Extracts from a Review of Mr. Hall's Sermon on Modern Infidelity, written by Sir James Mackintosh. Published in the Monthly Review for February,* 1800.

As far as philosophy and eloquence can make a publication important, and as far as very peculiar circumstances can render it interesting, certainly no sermon of our times merits a more elaborate criticism than that of Mr. Hall.

A new set of Infidels has arisen in this age, who, with a boldness unknown to their predecessors, not only reject religion as *false,* but condemn it as *pernicious.* The great majority of former unbelievers were so far from denying its *usefulness,* that they represented it as an invention of statesmen, for the very purpose of giving aid to morality and efficacy to the laws; but some of our modern infidels declare open war against every principle and form of religion, natural as well as revealed, as hostile to morality, and therefore destructive of the happiness of the human race. This extravagant and detestable paradox, which long lay neglected in the forgotten volumes of Cardan and Spinoza, is now revived and disseminated by men who possess the dangerous art of making paradoxes popular. Notwithstanding its evident and monstrous absurdity, it has gained many proselytes on the continent of Europe; and a few, we fear, even in this fortunate island; which, as it was the first country that was seized with the disease of infidelity, was the first also which was completely cured of that pestilential malady. Against this new sect a most vigorous and formidable attack is made in the sermon before us, by Mr. Hall, the pastor of a dissenting congregation at Cambridge; who, in his preface, most earnestly deprecates all contentions between different sects of Christians in the presence of the common enemy; and who speaks of his being a dissenter only as a motive for generous emulation, and for vying with the church in zeal and vigour in defence of our common Christianity, in imitation of the ablest and most virtuous dissenters of former times.

" When, at the distance of more than half a century, Chris- " tianity was assaulted by a *Woolston,* a *Tindal,* and a *Mor-* " *gan,* it was ably supported both by clergymen of the " established church, and writers among Protestant dissen- " ters. The labours of a *Clarke* and a *Butler* were associ- " ated with those of a *Doddridge,* a *Leland,* and a *Lardner,* " with such equal reputation and success, as to make it " evident that the intrinsic excellence of religion needs not " the aid of external appendages; but that, with or with- " out a dowry, her charms are of sufficient power to fix " and engage the heart."

Happy will it be if this passage shall produce its proper effects both on the dissenters and on the clergy of the establishment; if it shall animate the former to a noble rivalship of exertion in the general cause of religion; and if it shall dispose the latter to view the dissenters no longer with suspicion on account of theological differences of inferior

moment, and of *supposed* political differences, but to regard them with the affection which is due to fellow-christians, and fellow-soldiers in the army of religion and of truth. Unfortunate animosities and fatal suspicions have arisen between them, from causes which were, perhaps, irresistible. Neither party, probably, is entirely blameless. If the dissenters, following the example of Mr. Hall, will sacrifice the pride of a sect to the cause of religion, they will at least have the merit of making a fair experiment on the temper of the church; and it will be ascertained whether the established clergy of our days will receive the successors of Leland and Lardner, as these illustrious men were received by the most distinguished prelates of their times. We have no doubt that the experiment would be successful, and that the result of such an amicable struggle would be a new triumph for Christianity, both in the defeat of her enemies, and in the closer union of all her children, in the establishment of christian truth, and in the diffusion of christian charity: so that infidelity may at length not only be exposed, but shamed and silenced, and those sects which continue to differ in inferior questions of opinion and discipline, may at least agree in forbearance and mutual kindness. Mr. Hall has shown the example to his brethren, and held out the invitation to those from whom he dissents. He has done his duty to his country and to his religion, and he has done it nobly. Let us hope that he has not sown his seed in a barren soil.

Though Mr. Hall, however, in our opinion, has victoriously established his principle with respect to this part of the subject [the power of religion in producing the higher class of virtues], he is with reason convinced that the *indirect* influence of religion, as it enters into our sentiments and forms our character, is much more extensive and important than its *direct* influence, as arising from a deliberate regard to the happiness or misery of another life, and from its fitness to fill up that chasm that is founded merely on the utility of virtue in the present world. It is on the subject of the *indirect* influence of religion, that he has chiefly displayed all the powers of his vigorous understanding, and all the stores of his richly endowed mind. It is here that he exhibits an union of comprehensive philosophy with animated and splendid eloquence, of which few other examples are to be found. It is here, on a subject which has been discussed and (it might have been thought) exhausted by the greatest men of many successive ages, that Mr. Hall has given the most decisive proof of his genius, by many arguments and reflections which are at once original, just, and profound. Those who are familiar with moral discussions know the extreme difficulty of producing even a *new paradox*, on subjects which have so often and so long employed all the powers of the human understanding. It is easy for men of sense to deliver very important moral truths, if they will content themselves with repeating and enforcing what has been often said before; which we are far from denying to be very useful, and indeed absolutely necessary. It is possible, though not easy, for men of ingenuity, if they merely seek singularity, and throw off all regard to truth and the interests of mankind, to discover some new path in the wilderness of error which no former hunter of paradoxes had explored. To be *original* and *just*, however, is on all subjects very difficult; and it is a mark of the highest superiority of understanding, when displayed on a subject which seemed so nearly exhausted as the connexion between morality and religion.

If we were to indulge our own feelings without regard to the limits of our review, we should scarcely know when to finish our extracts, or how to bound our praises. This sermon, indeed, is in every respect entitled to rank among the first productions of the age. It is distinguished by solid and profound philosophy; the very reverse of that sorry and shallow sophistry which has of late usurped the name. It breathes a spirit of humility, piety, and charity; worthy of that pure and divine religion, to the defence of which the author has consecrated his talents. His eloquence is not a puny and gaudy bauble, fashioned by the tools and tricks of a mechanical rhetorician; it is the natural effusion of a fertile imagination, of an ardent mind, and of a heart glowing with zeal for truth, with reverence for God, and with love for men. His style is easy, various, and animated; not free, indeed, from those petty incorrectnesses which seem to be scarcely separable from natural composition, but perfectly exempt from affectation, a blemish far more unpardonable than negligence, and into which those who too studiously avoid carelessness have in general been too liable to fall. On a review of all his various excellences, we cannot but expect with confidence that the name of Mr. Hall will be placed by posterity, with the illustrious names of Paley and of Watson, among the best writers of the age, as well as the most vigorous defenders of religious truth and the brightest examples of Christian charity.

2. *From Sir James Mackintosh's Review of Proceedings in the Case of Benjamin Flower. British Critic, August* 1800.

He tells us in his preface, "There is no one living more "guarded in bringing unsubstantial charges than myself." p. 17. He also observes, that "the mere change of senti- "ment is not in itself criminal, it is sometimes virtuous." p. 22. After these declarations, we should of course have expected that he would not have applied the most contumelious and opprobrious language to virtuous men, on no better pretext than that of a "mere change of sentiment." As this "change" might be "virtuous," all "charges" founded only upon it must be "unsubstantiated." Now mark the conduct of this man, and let him be tried by his own principles. Mr. Hall, his townsman, and, as we understand, formerly his pastor, is well known to have lately published a most admirable Sermon, in which he employed all the powers of reason, and all the vigour and splendour of eloquence, in displaying the abominable consequences of Atheism. "*The very head and front of his offending hath "this extent, no farther.*" His whole guilt consisted in this: that, being a minister of Christianity, he had the *illiberality* and cruelty to attack poor Atheism, and its meek and unbloody apostles, the amiable French republicans. For this great crime this miserable scribbler attempts to raise a louder clamour against Mr. Hall than has been raised against other dissenting ministers for renouncing their belief in God. Bishops may be libelled, kings may be slandered, all laws, human and divine, may be insulted and reviled; but France and Atheism are sacred things, which it seems no Englishman, or at least no dissenting minister, is to attack with impunity; which he cannot reason against without having his character stigmatized as a time-server; the warm language of his youth cited against his more mature opinions: and all the prejudices of his sect, or even of his congregation, artfully inflamed against his good name, his professional usefulness, and perhaps his professional existence. The black and fell malignity which pervades this man's attack on Mr. Hall raises it to a sort of diabolical importance, of which its folly, and ignorance, and vulgarity, cannot entirely deprive it. This must be our excuse for stooping so low as to examine it.

His first charge is, that Mr. Hall now speaks of the French

Revolution in different language from that which he used in 1793. How many men have retained the same opinions on that subject? There may be some, and Mr. Benjamin Flower may be one; for there are men who have hearts too hard to be moved by crimes, or heads too stupid to be instructed by experience. The second accusation against Mr. Hall is, that he has imputed a great part of the horrors of the last ten years to the immoral, antisocial, and barbarising spirit of Atheism. Will this man deny, on principles of reason, that Atheism has such a tendency? If he does, what becomes of his pretended zeal for religion? Or will he, on the authority of experience, deny that Atheism has actually produced such effects? If he does, we refer him, not to Professor Robison, or the Abbé Barruel, of whose labours he, as might be expected, speaks with real rancour and affected contempt; but to the works of Atheists and anarchists themselves, which he will think much better authority. Has he read the correspondence of Voltaire, of Diderot, of D'Alembert? Has he consulted any of the publications which have issued during the last ten years from the Paris press? Does he know that all the fanatical Atheists of Europe (and England is not free from this pest) almost publicly boast that in thirty years no man in a civilized country will believe in God? Has he never heard that the miners of Cornwall were instigated to sell their clothes in order to purchase the impious ravings of Tom Paine; or that they were gratuitously distributed among the people of Scotland, with such fatal effects, that a large body of that once religious people made a bonfire of their Bibles, in honour of the new apostle? Has he been informed that the London Corresponding Society (enlightened by the *Système de la Nature*, of which the translation was hawked in penny numbers at every stall in the Metropolis) deliberated whether they ought not to uncitizen Tom Paine, for superstitiously professing *some* belief in the existence of God? DOES HE KNOW THAT THE SAME SOCIETY RESOLVED, THAT THE BELIEF OF A GOD WAS SO PERNICIOUS AN OPINION, AS TO BE AN EXCEPTION TO THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF TOLERATION? Does he perceive the mischievous and infernal art with which only Deism is preached to the deluded peasantry of Scotland, while Atheism is reserved for the more illuminated ruffians of London? ALL THIS, AND PROBABLY MUCH MORE, WE FEAR HE KNOWS BUT TOO WELL! Yet it is in the midst of these symptoms of a meditated revolt against all religion, and of bloody persecution practised wherever Atheists are strong, and projected where they are weak,

against the Christian worship, and all its ministers of all sects and persuasions, that this man has the effrontery to make it a matter of accusation against Mr. Hall, that he exhorted nonconformists, *not to abandon their dissent*, but merely to unite their efforts with those of the church, in resisting the progress of Atheism. He, it seems, hates the church more than he loves religion. He has more zeal for dissent than for the belief of the existence of a Deity. His pious zeal would prefer slavery, under the disciples of *Condorcet* and *Volney*, to a temporary co-operation with the church which produced *Taylor* and *Barrow!* That such should be the sentiments of an obscure scribbler, is a matter of small moment; though, notwithstanding his complaints of the state of the press, this is the first time, since England was a nation, that any man would have dared to publish them. But that such should be the sentiments of a numerous sect continuing to call themselves Christians, would indeed be a matter of very serious consideration. But it cannot be. The body of Dissenters will hasten to disavow such detestable sentiments. They will acknowledge as their representative, not this libeller, but the eloquent and philosophical preacher whom he has so foully slandered; whom no dissenting minister has surpassed in talents, and whom none has equalled or even nearly approached in taste and elegance of composition.

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3. *From the Notes to Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon. Easter,* 1800.

After defending Mr. Hall from the censures of those who blamed him for styling Hooker "great and judicious," he proceeds thus:

In common with all men of letters, I read with exquisite delight Mr. Hall's sermon, lately published. As compositions, his former works are replete with excellence; but his last approaches to perfection, *μετα τον σεμνον την χαριν ἐχει*. He apologizes for its length, but the apology was unnecessary: for every man of taste and virtue will apply to this publication, what Photius said upon the λειμωναριον of Joannes Moschus, *ἐξ ἁπαντων τυ χρησιμον ὁ συνετος και ὁ θεοφιλης ἀνηρ δρεπομενος, ουκ ἀν των συντεταγμενων κορον καταγνοιη*. Bacon tells us that "the contemplative Atheist is rare, and that the Atheist did never perturb states

because it makes men weary of themselves as looking no farther." But I agree with Mr. Hall, that "the present times furnish a melancholy exception to this general observation;" and Mr. Hall will probably agree with Bacon, "that superstition also has been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new primum mobile, that ravisheth all the spheres of government." (Bacon's 17th and 18th Essays.) The liveliness of Mr. Hall's imagination, and the strength of his feelings, may now and then have led him to speak rather too strongly in each of his late publications. In the former [the Apology for the Freedom of the Press], I thought that he ascribed too much to the effects of Popery under the French monarchy; and, in the latter, too much to the effects of philosophy in the French Revolution. But, in both works, he has made many wise and interesting observations; in both he has preserved a most beautiful and animated style; through both he has been actuated, I believe, by the purest motives; and by the last more especially, he has deserved well from every friend to civilized society and pure religion. I am not sure that Mr. Hall stands in need of any vindication upon the score of inconsistency; but I *am* sure that he is most able to vindicate himself against accusations really strong, if such there be, and I am equally sure that he has too much candour and too much magnanimity to persist in any error, which his own sagacity may discover, or the objections of his antagonists shall clearly prove.

Having stated my wishes, that in a few, I mean a very few, instances, Mr. Hall had been a little more wary in pushing his principles to consequences, which they may not quite warrant, I will give my general opinion of him in the words that were employed to describe a prelate, whose writings, I believe, are familiar to him, and whom he strongly resembles, not perhaps in variety of learning, but in fertility of imagination, in vigour of thinking, in rectitude of intention, and holiness of life. Yes, Mr. Hall, like Bishop Taylor, "has the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint."

Sincere as my attachment is to Protestantism, I confess that I have been pained by some outrageous invectives that have been lately thrown out against the church of Rome; and at the present crisis, I must further confess, that they appear to me not only unjust, but indiscreet, and even inhuman. Let me remind the accusers of Mr. Hall, that, in the estimation of Lord Bacon, "divisions in religion, if they

be many, introduce Atheism;"—"that there is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think they do best by going farthest from what they think the superstition formerly received; and, therefore, care should be had that the good be not taken away with the bad, which commonly is done when the people is the reformer." Among those who censure Mr. Hall, there may be thoughtless and injudicious persons, who often repeat the witty and decisive answer of Sir Henry Wotton to the priest, who asked, "Where was your religion to be found before Luther?" Let me then recall to their memory the advice which Sir Henry gave to one, whose earnestness exceeded his knowledge, and who was perpetually railing against the Papists: "Pray, Sir, forbear, till you have studied the points better; for the wise Italians have this proverb, '*He that understandeth amiss concludes worse;*' and take heed of thinking, the farther you go from the Church of Rome, the nearer you are to God." To men of sounder judgement and more candid dispositions, I would recommend the serious perusal of "Cassandri Consultatio," of Grotius's notes upon it, and his three replies to Rivetus. When they read the "Syllabus Librorum et Epistolarum doctorum aliquot et priorum virorum," in the third volume of Grotius's works, they may cease to think Mr. Hall singular, when he remarks, in his preface, "How trivial, for "the most part, are the controversies of Christians with each "other!" They may be disposed to join him in his prayer, that "Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim;" and they may be converted to the wise and salutary opinion of Grotius, "Quam non sit difficilis in Religione Conciliatio, si controvertendi studium vitetur!"

NOTE C.—[See page 102.]

Character of Mr. Hall as a Preacher.

From the London Magazine, No. XIV. Feb. 1, 1821. *Written by the Editor, Mr. John Scott, Author of "Visits to Paris," &c.*

Some of them (the dissenting ministers) are, at the present day, exhibiting no ordinary gifts and energies; and to the most distinguished of these we propose to direct the attention of our readers.

Mr. Hall, though perhaps the most distinguished ornament of the Calvinistic* dissenters, does not afford the best opportunity for criticism. His excellence does not consist in the predominance of one of his powers, but in the exquisite proportion and harmony of all. The richness, variety, and extent of his knowledge, are not so remarkable as his absolute mastery over it. He moves about in the loftiest sphere of contemplation, as though he were "native and endued to its element." He uses the finest classical allusions, the noblest images, and the most exquisite words, as though they were those which came first to his mind, and which formed his natural dialect. There is not the least appearance of straining after greatness in his most magnificent excursions; but he risest to the loftiest heights with a child-like ease. His style is one of the clearest and simplest—the least encumbered with its own beauty—of any which ever has been written. It is bright and lucid as a mirror, and its most highly-wrought and sparkling embellishments are like ornaments of crystal, which, even in their brilliant inequalities of surface, give back to the eye little pieces of the true imagery set before them.

The works of this great preacher are, in the highest sense of the term, imaginative, as distinguished not only from the didactic, but from the fanciful. He possesses "the vision and faculty divine," in as high a degree as any of our writers in prose. His noblest passages do but make truth visible in the form of beauty, and "clothe upon" abstract ideas, till they become palpable in exquisite shapes. The dullest writer would not convey the same meaning in so few words, as he has done in the most sublime of his illustrations. Imagination, when like his, of the purest water, is so far from being improperly employed on divine subjects, that it only finds its real objects in the true and the eternal. This power it is which disdains the scattered elements of beauty, as they appear distinctly in an imperfect world, and strives by accumulation, and by rejecting the alloy cast on all things, to embody to the mind that ideal beauty which shall be realized hereafter. This, by shedding a consecrating light on

* We use this epithet merely as that which will most distinctly characterize the extensive class to which it is applied, well aware that there are shades of difference among them, and that many of them would decline to call themselves after any name but that of Christ.

all it touches, and "bringing them into one," anticipates the future harmony of creation. This already sees the "soul of goodness in things evil," which shall one day change the evil into its likeness. This already begins the triumph over the separating powers of death and time, and renders their victory doubtful, by making us feel the immortality of the affections. Such is the faculty which is employed by Mr. Hall to its noblest uses. There is no rhetorical flourish—no mere pomp of words—in his most eloquent discourses. With vast excursive power, indeed, he can range through all the glories of the Pagan world, and, seizing those traits of beauty which they derived from primeval revelation, restore them to the system of truth. But he is ever best when he is intensest—when he unveils the mighty foundations of the rock of ages—or makes the hearts of his hearers vibrate with a strange joy, which they will recognize in more exalted stages of their being.

Mr. Hall has unfortunately committed but few of his discourses to the press. His sermon on the tendencies of Modern Infidelity is one of the noblest specimens of his genius. Nothing can be more fearfully sublime than the picture which he gives of the desolate state to which Atheism would reduce the world; or more beautiful and triumphant than his vindication of the social affections. His sermon on the Death of the Princess Charlotte contains a philosophical and eloquent development of the causes which make the sorrows of those who are encircled by the brightest appearances of happiness peculiarly affecting; and gives an exquisite picture of the gentle victim adorned with sacrificial glories. His Discourses on War—on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister—and on the Work of the Holy Spirit, are of great and various excellence. But as our limits will allow only a single extract, we prefer giving the close of a sermon preached in the prospect of the invasion of England by Napoleon, in which he blends the finest remembrance of the antique world, the dearest associations of British patriotism, and the pure spirit of the gospel, in a strain as noble as could be poured out by Tyrtæus.

[The passages quoted are from the sermon on "the Sentiments proper to the Present Crisis."]

There is nothing very remarkable in Mr. Hall's manner of delivering his sermons. His simplicity, yet solemnity of deportment, engage the attention, but do not promise any of his most rapturous effusions. His voice is feeble, but

distinct; and as he proceeds, trembles beneath his images, and conveys the idea that the spring of sublimity and beauty in his mind is exhaustless, and would pour forth a more copious stream if it had a wider channel than can be supplied by the bodily organs. The plainest and least inspired of his discourses are not without delicate gleams of imagery, and felicitous turns of expression. He expatiates on the prophecies with a kindred spirit, and affords awful glimpses into the valley of vision. He often seems to conduct his hearers to the top of the "Delectable Mountains," whence they can see from afar the glorious gates of the eternal city. He seems at home among the marvellous revelations of St. John; and while he expatiates on them, leads his hearers breathless through ever-varying scenes of mystery, far more glorious and surprising than the wildest of oriental fables. He stops when they most desire that he should proceed, when he has just disclosed the dawnings of the inmost glory to their enraptured minds—and leaves them full of imaginations of "things not made with hands"—of joys too ravishing for smiles—and of impulses which wing their hearts "along the line of limitless desires."

Sketches of Mr. Hall's Powers as a Writer.

1. *From the Quarterly Review*, No. 95.

Whatever may be the value of the rough notes, when Hall not merely hews out materials, but brings them too to an excellent work, excellent indeed it is; and his Sermons on Modern Infidelity, on War, on the Death of the Princess Charlotte, on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister, and not least, the discourse entitled "Sentiments proper to the present Crisis," are all wonderful compositions; wonderful both for the scale and the variety of the powers they display: a head so metaphysical, seeming to have little in common with an imagination so glowing; declamation so impassioned, with wisdom so practical; touches of pathos so tender, with such caustic irony, such bold invective, such spirit-stirring encouragements to heroic deeds; and all conveyed in language worthy to be the vehicle of such diverse thoughts, precise or luxuriant, stern or playful—that most rare, but most eloquent of all kinds of speech, the masculine mother tongue of an able

man, which education has chastened but not killed; constructed after no model of which we are aware; more massive than Addison, more easy and unconstrained than Johnson, more sober than Burke: such are the features of Hall's deliberate compositions, and such is our most willing testimony to their worth.

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2. *From the Edinburgh Weekly Journal.*

Hall has long been ranked with the highest of our classics; and few, we believe, will hazard an attack upon his fame. In depth, vigour, and comprehensiveness of mind; in intimate acquaintance with the springs of action, and sagacious detection of the sources of our errors; in that logical clearness which could see the strong points of a question, and gain the exact conclusion at which it was his wish to arrive; in admirable disposition of the materials he had gathered; in an imagination which threw life into the abstractions of the understanding, and which, how active soever, was yet the servant of the intellect; in sympathy with his fellow-men, and zeal for their best interests; in love of the admirable, in scorn of the base; in steady adherence to what he deemed the right; in that loftiness of thought which seemed only in its element when it had reached the height in which common minds grow dizzy; in affluence of language, skill in its application, and capacity of bringing out as well its strength as its harmony; in every gift and accomplishment essential to a finished man,—we know not where to look for one his superior. Neither ought we to forget the fine adjustment of his faculties, and the classical repose that was its natural result.

NOTE D.—[See page 156.]

An Extract of a Letter from Dr. Prichard.

The following extract of a letter from Dr. Prichard to Dr. Frederick Thackeray, of Cambridge, describing con-

cisely the results of the *post mortem* examination, unfolds the cause of Mr. Hall's acute suffering for so many years.

"We found the heart diseased in substance, and the muscular structure soft, and looking like macerated cellular membrane; the left ventricle was judged to be one-third larger than usual. The whole of the aorta was diseased; the internal membrane, in parts where it had not been in contact with blood, of a bright scarlet colour, which increased in deepness, and in the abdominal part of the artery was of a red purple hue. It contained in several places patches of bony matter, about the size of a sixpence. This was the case particularly about the origin of the arteria innominata. The lungs were healthy. The kidney on the right side was *entirely filled* by a large, rough, pointed calculus. There was also an exostosis on the body of the fourth dorsal vertebra, about the third of an inch in height, and prominent. This was too high to be the cause of the long-continued pain, which must have arisen from the renal calculus.

"The gall bladder was quite full of calculi, though he had never experienced any symptoms referring to the liver or biliary secretion.

"Probably no man ever went through more physical suffering than Mr. Hall: he was a fine example of the triumph of the higher powers of mind, exalted by religion, over the infirmities of the body. His loss will long be felt in this place, not only by persons of his own communion, but by all that have any esteem for what is truly great and good."

NOTE E.—[See page 156.]

Sketches of Mr. Hall's Character, especially as manifested in Private Life.*

Mr. Hall seemed to me† very remarkable for being always in earnest. He was a perfect contrast to Socrates,

* The great accordance in some striking particulars of these independent sketches of Mr. Hall, may seem to give them, in those respects, almost the air of tautology. But I venture to retain the whole, to show in how many essential points every competent judge formed necessarily the same estimate.

† The late Rev. William Anderson, Classical Tutor at the Baptist Education Society.

who, as you will recollect, was called the ironist, from his constant assumption of a character that did not belong to him. Mr. Hall did not practise the Socratic irony; he never said one thing and meant another. He was earnest even in his wit and humour. It was never his design to impose on any person, and he was entirely free from suspicion. He was artless as a child. A sort of infantine simplicity was conspicuous in many parts of his conduct. With his extraordinary capacity, and a propension for abstract and refined thinking, it was curious and remarkable to observe the interest that he took in the present object. He threw himself entirely into whatever might be the topic of conversation, and seemed altogether engrossed with what pressed on the sense and solicited immediate attention. It was perhaps owing to this interest in the present object, together with an undecaying vivacity of feeling, that he appeared to enjoy with the keenest relish whatever tended to innocent pleasure. Gratifications that usually give delight only in the earlier periods of life he enjoyed to the very last, as if he had not advanced beyond boyhood.

His powers of conversation were very extraordinary, and discovered quite as great abilities as appeared in his preaching or writings. He seemed equally capable of talking clearly, forcibly, copiously, beautifully, on every subject, however common it might be, or however abstruse and remote from the course of general thought and conversation. He avoided, rather than invited, discourse on those subjects that might have been supposed to be most congenial with the cast and habit of his mind, and the current of his studies and speculations. He never *usurped* conversation, nor showed any disposition to give it any particular direction. He laid hold of casual topics of every kind, apparently to beguile the time, rather than as the occasions of imparting his knowledge, diffusing his wisdom, or turning them to any serious or practical purpose.

It was impossible to be often with Mr. Hall, and not be struck with the degree of nature that prevailed in all his words and actions, and in the whole of his bearing. Incidents, parts of conversations, that when separated from the circumstances in which they took place have an air of eccentricity and affectation, seemed perfectly natural as they occurred. All easily and spontaneously arose from the structure and usual operation of his mind, and the surrounding circumstances. There was no aim on his part to be singular, no effort to excite surprise, or catch admiration.

A very prominent quality of his mind seemed to be benevolence. He sympathized most deeply with all forms of distress, and endeavoured to afford relief, by suitable suggestions, by the exertions of his talents, and by pecuniary aid, to the full extent of his means. It was easy to discern in him a great concern and anxiety to render those that were about him as comfortable as possible, and a visible delight in the pleasure of his friends. Akin to his great benevolence was an unusual sensibility to kindness. Little services, offices of respect, and affection, small endeavours to promote his comfort, that would generally be considered as matters of course, even from those whose relation to him made the action a duty, would diffuse a gleam of benignity and satisfaction, and draw forth lively expressions of gratitude.

In him the reasoning faculty beamed forth with transcendent strength and grandeur.* He was one of those astonishing intellects which are said to "to grasp a system by intuition," and which scarcely commence their researches, before they fetch into view, and arrange exactly, those deeply embosomed treasures of the intellectual mine, for the discovery and display of which most men, even of cultivated talent, must have engaged in a laborious process. When roused in argument, he shone as a metaphysician of the profoundest class; and proved that he was conversant with the philosophical writers of the ancient and of the modern schools—of the worst schools which have dishonoured Germany, and of the best which have shed a lustre on Great Britain. His acumen quickly detected logical flaws in a fellow disputant. His extensive knowledge, his sound judgement, his finished taste, his luxuriant wit, and his noble vehemence, enabled him to encircle every topic which he touched with felicitous illustrations.

Great must be the number of those, especially in public life, who are thankfully conscious of being in no slight measure indebted, under God, to their intercourse with him, for

* Funeral Sermon preached at Broadmead, March 6th, 1831, by the late Rev. Joseph Hughes, A.M. This excellent man was a pupil of Mr. Hall's at Bristol, and afterwards succeeded him as classical tutor there. I may now add, what a deference to Mr. Hughes's own feelings has prevented me from saying earlier, that ages to come will "rise and call him blessed," as the honoured *inventor* of that most admirable and useful institution, "*The British and Foreign Bible Society.*"

views, principles, and impressions, and an increased facility of displaying them all, by which they have been themselves invigorated and improved, and have also been qualified, in their turn, to bestow a portion of the same benefit on others.

Perhaps the character of Mr. Hall's mind * cannot be better described in a single word than by saying that it is perfectly balanced, and combines all the various powers in their highest perfection. If he possessed any one faculty in the same exuberance in which he possesses them all, and in respect to the others were not in the least distinguished, it would be enough to render him an extraordinary man. If he reasons, it is always with strict philosophical accuracy; with a keen, searching glance into the very mysteries of his subject, leaving the reader or hearer often at a loss whether most to admire the light, or the strength, or the depth of his argument; and generally leaving his antagonist to the alternative of quiet submission, or preparing for a still more mortifying defeat. If he comes into the regions of taste or imagination, here he is also equally at home. With the same apparent ease that his mind can frame a powerful argument, it will pour forth images of exquisite beauty and tenderness, as well as of overwhelming majesty and strength. In short, there is no part of the intellectual world in which he does not seem to breathe freely, as if it were his peculiar element. He is at home as far below the surface of things, as far down in the depths of metaphysical abstraction, as perhaps any mind ever penetrates. He is at home amidst the common-sense realities of life, judging of men and things with as much accuracy, as if the whole business of his life had been to watch and analyze the operations of the human heart. He is at home in the field of fancy, in worlds of his own creation; and he can find in the mountain and in the valley, in the ocean and the sky, in the storm and the lightning, in every thing in the kingdom of nature and providence, a field where his imagination may expatiate with unlimited power. His acquisitions correspond, in a good degree, to his original endowments. It were not to be expected, indeed, it were not possible, that he could have gone extensively into every department of science and learning, in which his great and versatile mind would have enabled him to become pre-eminent; we suppose his favourite studies to have been the science of morals and theology, though he has shown himself deeply versed in political economy, and the various branches of polite literature. His knowledge of the ancient and modern classics is extensive and exact; and, if we mistake not, they make part of his every-day reading, even at this advanced period of life.

* From the Rev. Dr. Sprague, of Albany, New York, author of a most interesting and instructive volume on "Revivals of Religion" in America. This gentleman, when in England in 1828, spent some time in Bristol. The account from which I select the above passage was written before Mr. Hall's death.

We remember to have been equally delighted and astonished at hearing him converse for an hour upon the philosophy of language, in a style which discovered a degree of reflection and research, from which one might have supposed that it was not only a favourite topic, but that he had made it the study of his life.

It were naturally to be expected, an intellect of such uncommon strength should be associated with a corresponding strength of feeling. This is true, in respect to Mr. Hall; and it is no doubt to the power of his feelings that the world is indebted for some of the most brilliant and useful of his efforts. A man of dull temperament, let his intellect be what it might, could never produce those fine strains of soul-stirring eloquence, in which it is the privilege of Mr. Hall to pour out even his common thoughts. But with all the strength of his feelings, his heart is full of kindness and affection. In all his intercourse he is noble and generous. His attachments are strong and enduring. He is open and honest in respect to every thing and every body. As no one can approach him without a deep feeling of respect, so no one can be admitted to the hospitality of his fire-side, and the privilege of his friendship, without finding that the sentiment of respect is fast ripening into that of cordial and affectionate attachment.

In private conversation Mr. Hall is the admiration and delight of every circle in which he mingles. He converses a great deal, partly because when his mind is excited it is not easy for him to be silent, and partly because there is so much in his conversation to interest and edify, that almost every one who is in his company regards it as a privilege to listen rather than talk, and acts accordingly. We have been struck with the fact, that, let the conversation turn upon whatever subject it may, even though it be a subject on which he might be expected to be least at home, he is equally

ready, equally eloquent. He possesses, beyond any man we have known, the faculty of bringing facts and principles which are stored up in his mind, instantly to bear upon any given subject; throwing around it at once, to the mind of the hearer, the clear strong light in which it appears to his own. This must be owing, partly to the original power which he possesses, of discerning almost intuitively even the most remote relations of things to each other, and partly to the perfect order with which his intellectual acquisitions are arranged. In the midst of an involved discussion, he will bring to his aid insulated facts from the various departments of knowledge, without the least hesitation or effort, just as we have known some men who had a remarkable attachment to order, able to enter their library, and lay their hand on any book at pleasure in the dark. But, notwithstanding he converses so much, there is not the semblance of an obtrusive or ostentatious manner; nothing that seems to say that he is thinking of his own superiority; on the contrary, he seems to forget, and sometimes makes those around him forget, the greatness of the man, in the greatness which he throws around his subject. He has a strong passion for sarcasm, which often comes out in his conversation, and sometimes with prodigious effect. Yet he is by no means severe in the common estimate which he forms of character; so far from it, that he treats characters for the most part with unusual lenity, and sometimes seems delighted with exhibitions of intellect from others, which would have appeared to every one else far below the most common-place efforts of his own mind.

Perhaps, however, after all that has been said, the most interesting point of view in which Mr. Hall's character can be contemplated, is his entire freedom from a spirit of sectarianism, and his efforts to unite evangelical Christians of various denominations in the bonds of holy affection, and in their exertions to advance a common cause. He is a Baptist; but he dissents from most of his brethren on the subject of strict communion. Indeed, he is the pastor both of a Baptist and Independent church, worshipping in the same congregation; and he administers the Lord's Supper to them separately, because many of the Baptists still adhere to close communion. But he does not hesitate to avow that he has more fellowship of feeling for an Independent or a Presbyterian, than he has for a close-communion Baptist. His whole intercourse and conduct are in full accordance with his liberal principles. During his residence at Leicester, he

formed an intimacy with the Rev. Thomas Robinson, a distinguished clergyman of the established church. After the death of Mr. Robinson, Mr. Hall pronounced an eulogium upon him, which is in his best style of eloquence, and which demonstrates that he is as capable of appreciating intellectual and moral excellence beyond, as within the limits of his own sect. Indeed, the qualities of his heart, no less than those of his understanding, utterly forbid that he should be *exclusive* either in his friendship or his intercourse; and the fact is, as might be expected, that the most enlightened and excellent in the various Christian denominations are among his friends.

In his countenance there is something which we do not expect ever to see faithfully copied; which, indeed, we do not believe *can* be copied in all its perfection. In certain states of feeling, his eye exhibits not merely the fire, but, if the expression may be allowed, the very lightning of genius. You could not meet him as a stranger in the market-place, without perceiving at a glance that he is no common man; and if he should turn his eye upon you when his mind is coming forth in the majesty and storm of burning thought, you would scarcely find it difficult to believe that he was intended to link man to some higher order of beings. In his very gait there is a majesty, which tells of the greatness of his intellect.

In his converse, as well as in his ministrations, no one could avoid being struck by a certain naturalness and simplicity, peculiar to himself, and rendered the more remarkable and engaging by its union with such consummate intelligence and eloquence.* His companion or hearer was alike surprised or charmed by the harmonious contrast of excellencies, so dissimilar, yet in him so perfectly combined.

In all that he uttered, whether in social or sacred discourse, there was a vivid freshness and raciness of thought and expression that marked it as the growth of his own mind, and gave an interest to his familiar remarks, as well as to the more elaborate productions of his mighty genius. Possessed of art and refinement in the highest degree, he had the rare and strange felicity of retaining unimpaired the charm of native beauty.

Among the predominant qualities of his nature, one of the most obvious was his openness, his ingenuous unreserve, his

* Communicated by the Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A. M., of Clifton.

social communicativeness. Conversation was not less his congenial element, than contemplation. He evidently delighted to disclose and impart the accumulated stores of his mind: while he seemed to luxuriate in that unequalled flueney of graceful or energetic language with which he was gifted. The warmth of his affections was proportioned to the strength of his intellect. His own mental opulence did not make him independent on the converse and friendship of those who were poor in comparison with himself. He felt, in the language of Cicero, and as he has elegantly portrayed his feelings in the sermon on the death of Dr. Ryland, that "Caritate et benevolentia sublata, omnis est è vita sublata jucunditas."

The benevolence of his capacious heart greatly contributed at once to inspire and increase his love of society and conversation; while, in the social circle, and in the solemn assembly, he appeared as a distinguished representative, a most expressive organ of our nature, in all its more familiar sentiments, or in all its more sublime conceptions and aspirations. Hence he was regarded by the multitudes who sought his public or his private presence, as a kind of universal property, whom all parties had a right to enjoy, and none to monopolize; before him all forgot their denominations, as he appeared to forget his own in the comprehensive idea of the Church of Christ.

In recollecting the moral features of his character, it is impossible to forget the consummate truth and sincerity, which left its unequivocal stamp on all he said, of which a suspicion never occurred to any one, and which gave to his discourses a solidity and an impressiveness, which, otherwise, their argument and eloquence could never have commanded. Never has there been a stronger, a more universal confidence in the sacred orator, as one whose eloquence was kindled in his own heart; never were the testimony of faith, and the rapture of hope, exhibited in a more manifestly genuine, unaffected, and consequently in a more convincing form. His was truly the "generoso incoetum pectus Honesto." This added to his ministry a singular and inestimable charm. Hence, more than any other advocate of evangelical principles, he was revered, even by the irreligious. His peculiar ascendancy over such was not acquired by any degree of compromise in his exhibition of spiritual religion; it was the involuntary result of their conviction that his earnestness was as perfect as his eloquence. Never can there have been a preacher more strikingly characterized

by a dignified simplicity, a majesty unalloyed by pomp; never was there a finer combination of the utmost manliness and grandeur with the utmost delicacy and pathos. No wonder that such qualities, combined in such perfection, should have produced so strong and so extensive an enchantment.

It must be acknowledged that the moral graces of his character derived a peculiar and accidental advantage from the intellectual power and splendour with which they were united; a remark particularly applicable to that child-like simplicity by which he was distinguished, and to that delicate and refined modesty, which was the natural indication of an interior and inwrought humility. "Be clothed with Humility," was the subject of his last lecture preparatory to the communion, the last entire address which I heard from his lips; (Jan. 1831) and as I returned in company with some other members of the Church of England, who privileged themselves with hearing him on these monthly opportunities, we were all impressed by the force which his pathetic exhortation acquired from his own conspicuous example of the grace he had recommended. His humility gave a charm to his character and to his preaching, which all his more brilliant qualities, without it, could not have supplied; while it served as a dark back-ground, from which their brilliant contrast rose the more impressive and sublime.

In thus slightly glancing at some of the more retired graces with which he was adorned, I cannot dismiss the hasty and unfinished sketch without referring to that sweet sunshine of serenity, cheerfulness, and bland good nature, which, unobscured by so much acute or wearing pain, habitually beamed in his noble aspect, and diffused its genial influence alike over his converse and his preaching. A friend, subject to constitutional depression of spirits, assured me that, on several occasions, he has found his sadness soothed by the balm of a visit or a sermon, for which he had resorted to Mr. Hall. Nothing morose, nothing gloomy, either in his natural temper, or in his religious views, impaired the fascination of his presence, or the benefit of his ministry.

The remembrance of such a man, especially as it is now embalmed and sanctified by death, (and his death was altogether in harmony with his character,) cannot leave any other than a beneficial influence, ennobling and elevating to the mind and heart. The name of "Robert Hall" is rich in sacred, as well as splendid, associations; a memento

of consecrated intellect and energy; an inspiring watch-word for the cultivation of Christian graces and of heavenly affections; an antidote to all that is unworthy in principle or practice; an attraction to whatever, in the intellectual or moral system, bears the stamp of unaffected excellence; whatever qualifies for the fruition of spiritual and eternal blessings; whatever is allied to the love of CHRIST AND GOD.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

MR. HALL'S CHARACTER AS A PREACHER.

BY JOHN FOSTER.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

MR. HALL'S CHARACTER AS A PREACHER.

The biographical and literary illustrations of Mr. Hall's character and performances, expected from the highly qualified Editor of his works, and from the eminent person who has engaged for a part of that tribute to his memory,* may render any formal attempt in addition liable to be regarded as both superfluous and intrusive; the public, besides, have been extensively and very long in possession of their own means of forming that judgement which has pronounced him the first preacher of the age: and again, so soon after the removal of such a man, while the sentiments of friendship and admiration are finding their natural expression in the language of unrestrained eulogy, it is hardly permitted to assume a judicial impartiality. From these considerations it has been with very great reluctance that I have consented, in compliance with the wishes of some of Mr. Hall's friends, to attempt a short description of what he was in the special capacity of a preacher; a subject which must

* These observations were written and transmitted to the publishers, a considerable time before the lamented and unexpected decease of Sir James Mackintosh. It is, perhaps worth mentioning, that the writer had felt it a propriety to abstain from any attempt at a comparison between Mr. Hall and the most celebrated English and French preachers, or ancient and modern orators of other classes; confidently expecting (besides being conscious of deficient qualifications,) that this would be a favourite exercise of Sir James's consummate critical judgement.

indeed be of chief account in *any* memorial of him; but may also admit of being taken in some degree separately from the general view of his life, character, and writings.

For more reasons than that it must be one cause, added to others, of an imperfect competence to describe him in that capacity, I have to regret the disadvantage of not having been more than very occasionally, perhaps hardly ten times in all, a hearer of Mr. Hall till within the last few years of his life. It appears to be the opinion of all those attendants on his late ministrations, who had also been his hearers in former times, (and, from recollection of the few sermons which I heard many years since, my own impression would be the same,) that advancing age, together with the severe and almost continual pressure of pain, had produced a sensible effect on his preaching, perceptible in an abatement of the energy and splendour of his eloquence. He was less apt to be excited to that intense ardour of emotion and utterance which so often, animating to the extreme emphasis a train of sentiments impressive by their intrinsic force, had held dominion over every faculty of thought and feeling in a large assembly. It is not meant, however, that a considerable degree of this ancient fire did not frequently appear glowing and shining again. Within the course of a moderate number of sermons there would be one or more which brought back the preacher of the times long past, to the view of those who had heard him in those times.

I have reason to believe, that this representation of his diminished energy should be nearly limited to a very late period, the period when an increased, but reluctant, use of opiates became absolutely necessary, to enable him to endure the pain which he had suffered throughout his life, and when another obscure malady was gradually working towards a fatal termination. For, at a time not more than seven or eight years since, I heard in close succession several sermons delivered in so ardent an excitement of sentiment and manner as I could not conceive it possible for himself, or any other orator to have surpassed. Even so lately as within the last four

or five years of his life, the recurrence of something approaching to this was not so unfrequent as to cause his friends the painful feeling (sometimes experienced by the hearers of an excellent minister declining into old age) that he was no longer to be regarded as the preacher that he once had been.

There was some compensation for the abatement of this character of force and vehemence, supplied by a certain tone of kindness, a milder pathos, more sensibly expressive of benevolence towards his hearers, than the impetuous, the almost imperious energy, so often predominant when an undepressed vitality of the physical system was auxiliary to the utmost excitement of his mind.

There seems to be an agreement of opinion that a considerable decline of the power or the activity of his *imagination* was evident in the latter part of his life. The felicities of figure and allusion of all kinds, sometimes illustrative by close analogy, often gay and humorous, sometimes splendid, less abounded in his conversation. And in his public discourses there appeared to be a much rarer occurrence of those striking images in which a series of thoughts seemed to take fire in passing on, to end in a still more striking figure, with the effect of an explosion. So that, from persons who would occasionally go to hear him with much the same taste and notions as they would carry to a theatrical or mere oratorical exhibition, and caring little about religious truth and instruction, there might be heard complaints of disappointment, expressed in terms of more than hinted depreciation. They had hardly any other idea of eloquence, even that of the pulpit, than that it must be *brilliant;* and they certainly might happen to hear, at the late period in question, several of his sermons which had not more than a very moderate share of this attraction. But even such persons, if disposed to attend his preaching regularly for a few weeks, might have been sure to hear some sermons in which the solidity of thought was finely inspirited with the sparkling quality they were requiring.

But whatever reduction his imagination may have suf-

fered from age, and the oppression of disease and pain, it is on all hands admitted that there was no decline in what he valued far more in both himself and others, and what all, except very young or defectively cultivated persons, and inferior poets, must regard as the highest of mental endowments—the intellectual power. His wonderful ability for comprehending and reasoning; his quickness of apprehension, his faculty for analyzing a subject to its elements, for seizing on the essential points, for going back to principles and forward to consequences, and for bringing out into an intelligible and sometimes very obvious form, what appeared obscure or perplexed, remained unaltered to the last. This noble intellect, thus seen with a diminished lustre of imagination, suggested the idea of a lofty eminence raising its form and summit clear and bare toward the sky, losing nothing of its imposing aspect by absence of the wreaths of tinctured clouds which may have invested it at another season.

It is to be observed, that imagination had always been a subordinate faculty in his mental constitution. It was never of that prolific power which threw so vast a profusion over the oratory of Jeremy Taylor or of Burke; or which could tempt him to revel, for the pure luxury of the indulgence, as they appear to have sometimes done, in the exuberance of imaginative genius.

As a preacher, none of those contemporaries who have not seen him in the pulpit, or of his readers in another age, will be able to conceive an adequate idea of Mr. Hall. His personal appearance was in striking conformity to the structure and temper of his mind. A large-built, robust figure, was in perfect keeping with a countenance formed as if on purpose for the most declared manifestation of internal power, a power impregnable in its own strength, as in a fortress, and constantly, without an effort, in a state for action.* That countenance was

* The portrait to accompany the Works, highly elaborated, and true to the general form and lineaments, fails to give exactly that stern, intense, and somewhat formidable *expression*, which the painter, Mr. Branwhite, was very successful in seizing, in spite of circumstances the most unfavourable for obtaining a likeness. Mr. Hall had an insuperable aversion to sit for his portrait.

usually of a cool, unmoved mien, at the beginning of the public service; and sometimes, when he was not greatly excited by his subject, or was repressed by pain, would not acquire a great degree of temporary expression during the whole discourse. At other times it would kindle into an ardent aspect as he went on, and toward the conclusion become lighted up almost into a glare. But, for myself, I doubt whether I was not quite as much arrested by his appearance in the interval while a short part of the service, performed without his assistance, immediately before the sermon, allowed him to sit in silence. With his eyes closed, his features as still as in death, and his head sinking down almost on his chest, he presented an image of entire abstraction. For a moment, perhaps, he would seem to wake to a perception of the scene before him, but instantly relapse into the same state. It was interesting to imagine the strong internal agency, which it was certain was then employed on the yet unknown subject about to be unfolded to the auditory.

His manner of public prayer, considered as an exercise of thought, was not exactly what would have been expected from a mind constituted like his. A manner so different in that exercise from its operation in all other employments could hardly have been unintentional: but on what principle it was preferred cannot be known or conjectured. It is to the *intellectual* consistence and order of his thoughts in public prayer that I am adverting, in uncertainty how far the opinion of others may have been the same; as to the *devotional* spirit, there could be but one impression. There was the greatest seriousness and simplicity, the plainest character of genuine piety, humble and prostrate before the Almighty. Both solemnity and good taste forbade indulgence in any thing showy or elaborately ingenious in such an employment. But there might have been, without an approach to any such impropriety, and as it always appeared to me, with great advantage, what I may venture to call a more *thinking* performance of the exercise; a series of ideas more reflectively conceived, and more connected and

classed in their order. Many of the conceptions were not, individually, presented in that specific expression which conveys one certain thing to the apprehension; nor were there, generally speaking, those *trains* of petitionary thought, which would strongly fix, and for a while detain, the attention on each distinctly, in the succession of the subjects of devotional interest.

No one, I may presume, will be so mistaken as to imagine, that *pieces of discussion*, formal developements of doctrine, nice casuistical distinctions, like sections of a theological essay, are meant in pleading that it must be of great advantage for engaging attention, exciting interest, and inducing reflection, that instead of a rapidly discursive succession of ideas, the leader of the devotions should often dwell awhile on one and another important topic, and with a number of accumulated sentiments specifically appropriate to each; in order that its importance, thus exposed and aggravated, may constrain the auditory to reflect how deeply they are concerned in that one subject of petition. Any one pernicious thing deprecated—a spiritual evil, a vice of the heart or life, an easily besetting temptation, a perilous delusion into which men are liable to fall, or a temporal calamity,—and so, on the other hand, any one of the good gifts implored,—might thus be exposed in magnified and palpable importance before the minds of the people.

Will it be objected that this would tend to a practice not consistent either with the comprehensiveness of religion, or with the generality of scope requisite to adapt the prayer to the aggregate interests of a very mixed assemblage; that it would be to confine the attention to a few selected particulars of religion, losing the view of its wide compass; and to reduce the prayer, which should be for all the people collectively regarded, to a set of adaptations to certain supposed individual cases, or small classes, singled out in the congregation, to the exclusion, in effect, of the general body? I may answer that, in perfect safety from shrinking into such specialty and exclusiveness, the great element of religion may be resolved into particular subjects and adaptations in public

prayer. Particular parts of divine truth and christian morals may come in view as suggesting matter of distinct and somewhat prolonged petition, conceived in terms that shall constantly and closely recognise the condition of the people. A man well exercised in religion, and well acquainted with the states and characters of men, might recount to himself a greater number of such topics than the longest book in the Bible comprises chapters; and would see that each of them might beneficially be somewhat amplified by thoughts naturally arising upon it; that one of them would be peculiarly appropriate to one portion of the assembly, another of them adapted to several conditions, and some of them commensurate with the interests of all. In one prayer of moderate length he might comprehend a number of these distinguishable topics, thus severally kept in view for a few moments; and, varying them from time to time, he might bring the concerns which are the business of prayer, in *parts*, and with special effects, before the minds of the people, instead of giving the course of his thoughts every time to the guidance of entirely accidental and miscellaneous suggestion. I might ask, why should *sermons* be constructed to fix the attention of a mixed congregation on distinct parts of religion, instead of being, each in succession, vaguely discursive over the whole field? I would not say that the two exercises are under exactly the same law; but still, is there a propriety, that in a discourse for religious instruction some selected topics should stand forth in marked designation, to work one certain effect on the understanding or the feelings, and *no* propriety that any corresponding principle should be observed in those prayers which may be supposed to request, and with much more than a passing momentary interest, such things as that instruction would indicate as most important to be obtained?

But besides all this, there is no hazard in affirming, that prayers which do not detain the thoughts on any certain things in particular, take very slight hold of the auditors. Things noted so transiently do not admit of a deliberate attention, and seem as if they did not claim

it; the assembly are not made conscious how much they want what is petitioned for; and at the close would be at a loss to recollect any one part as having awaked a strong consciousness that *that* is what they have *themselves* in a special manner to pray for when alone.

Such observations are, under small limitation, applicable to Mr. Hall's public prayer. The succession of sentences appeared almost casual, or in a connexion too slight to hold the hearer's mind distinctly, for a time, to a certain object. A very large proportion of the series consisted of texts of Scripture; and, as many of these were figurative, often requiring, in order to apprehend their plain sense, an act of thought for which there was not time, the mind was led on with a very defective conception of the exact import of much of the phraseology. He did not avail himself of the portion of Scripture he had just read, as a guiding suggestion of subjects for the prayer; and very seldom made it bear any particular relation to what was to follow as the subject of the discourse.

One could wish that, with the exception of very peculiar cases, *personalities*, when they must be introduced, should be as brief as possible in public prayer; especially such as point to individuals who are present, and whose own feelings, one should think, would earnestly deprecate their being made conspicuous objects of the prolonged attention of the congregation. Mr. Hall's consideration for individuals standing officially, or brought incidentally, in association with an assembly, often led him to a length and particularity in personal references, which one could not help regretting, as an encroachment on the time and more proper concerns of the exercise, and as a sanction lent by an example of such high authority to a practice which leads the thoughts quite away from the interests in common; tempting the auditors into an impertinence of imagination about the persons so placed in exhibition, their characters, domestic circumstances, and so forth; with possibly a silent criticism, not much in harmony with devotion, on some flaw of consistency between the terms which the speaker is now employing, and those which he may be heard, or may have been heard, to use in other times and places respecting the same individuals. In the laudatory tone and epithets into which he inevitably glides (for he never adverts to any *faults* of the persons thus prominently held in view, with prayer for their correction), it is hardly possible for him, while the matter is kept long under operation, to avoid its changing colour, from that of reverence towards God, into that of compliment to a fellow-mortal and fellow-sinner.

If there was a defect of concentration, an indeterminateness in the direction of thought, in Mr. Hall's public prayers, the reverse was conspicuous in his preaching. He was inferior to no preacher of any period in the capital excellence of having a definite purpose, a distinct assignable subject, in each sermon. Sometimes, indeed, as when intruders had robbed him of all his time for study, or when his spirits had been consumed by a prolonged excess of pain, he was reduced to take the license of discoursing with less definite scope, on the common subjects of religion. But he was never pleased with any scheme of a sermon in which he could not, at the outset, say exactly what it was he meant to do. He told his friends that he always felt "he could do nothing with" a text or subject till it resolved and shaped itself into a topic of which he could see the form and outline, and which he could take out both from the extensive system of religious truth, and, substantially, from its connexion with the more immediately related parts of that system; at the same time not failing to indicate that connexion, by a few brief clear remarks to show the consistency and mutual corroboration of the portions thus taken apart for separate discussion. This method insured to him and his hearers the advantage of an ample variety. Some of them remember instances in which he preached, with but a short interval, two sermons on what would have appeared, to common apprehension, but *one* subject, a very limited section of doctrine, or duty; yet the sermons went on quite different tracks of thought, presenting separate views of the subject, related to each other only by

a general consistency. His survey of the extended field of religion was in the manner of a topographer, who fixes for a while on one separate district, and then on another, finding in each, though it were of very confined dimensions, many curious matters of research, and many interesting objects; while yet he shall possess the wide information which keeps the country at large so comprehensively within his view, that he can notice and illustrate, as he proceeds, all the characters of the relation of the parts to one another and to the whole.

The preacher uniformly began his sermons in a low voice, and with sentences of the utmost plainness both of thought and language. It was not, I believe, in observance of any precept of the rhetoricians, or with any conscious intention, that he did so; it was simply the manner in which his mind naturally set in for the consideration of an important subject. This perfect plainness of the introduction, quietly delivered in a voice deficient in tone and force, and difficult to be heard at first by a large part of the congregation, occasioned surprise and disappointment sometimes to strangers drawn by curiosity to hear "the celebrated orator," in the expectation, perhaps, of his going off in powerful sallies, flourishes, and fulminations. "Can this be he?" has been the question whispered between some two such expectants, seated together. A short comment on the facts in Scripture history found in connexion with the text, or which had been the occasion of the words; or on circumstances in the condition of the primitive church; or on some ancient or modern error relating to the subject to be proposed; would give, within the space of five or ten minutes, the condensed and perspicuous result of much reading and study. Sometimes he would go immediately to his subject, after a very few introductory sentences. And the attentive hearer was certain to apprehend what that subject was. It was stated precisely, yet in so simple a manner as to preclude all appearance of elaborate definition.

The distribution was always perfectly inartificial, cast in an order of the least formality of division that could mark an intelligible succession of parts, very seldom exceeding the number of three or four; which set forth the elements of the subject in the merest natural form, if I may express it so, of their subsistence. Generally, each of these parts was illustrated in two or three particulars, noted as first, second, and perhaps third. He never attempted, never thought of, those schemes of arrangement in which parts are ingeniously placed in antithesis, or in such other disposition as to reflect cross-lights on one another, producing surprise and curious expectation, with a passing glance of thought at the dexterity of the preacher who can work them in their contrasted positions to one ultimate effect. It is not denied that such ingenious and somewhat quaint devices of arrangement have had their advantage, in the hands of men who made them the vehicles of serious and important sentiment, really desirous not to amuse but to attract and instruct. They catch attention, make the progress and stages of the discourse more sensible by the transitions between points apparently so abruptly asunder, and leave more durable traces in the memory than, it was often complained, could be preserved by Mr. Hall's sermons. But such a mode was entirely foreign to the constitution and action of his mind. He never came on his subject by any thing like manœuvre; never approached it *sideways;* never sought to secure himself resources in particular parts, corners, and adjuncts, against the effects of a failure in the main substance; never threw out the force of a subject in off sets; never expended it in dispersed varieties. He had it in one full single view before him, the parts lying in natural contiguity as a whole; and advanced straight forward in pursuance of a plain leading principle; looking to the right and the left just so far as to preserve the due breadth of the illustration.

This is meant as a description generally applicable to the earlier and middle portions of the discourse, which were often, as regarded in a purely intellectual view, much the most valuable.* It was highly interesting,

* There was a remission of strict connexion of thought towards the conclusion, where he threw himself loose into a strain of declamation, always earnest, and often fervid. This was of great effect in securing

even as a mere affair of mental operation, independently of the religious object, to accompany this part of his progress; from the announcement of his subject (sometimes in the form of a general proposition founded on the text, oftener in a more free exposition), onward through a series of statements, illustrations, and distinctions, till an important doctrine became unfolded to view, full in its explication, and strong in its evidence. In this progress he would take account of any objections which he deemed it of consequence to obviate, meeting them without evasion, with acuteness and exact knowledge, available to the point. Every mode and resource of argument was at his command; but he was singularly successful in that which is technically denominated *reductio ad absurdum*. Many a specious notion and cavil was convicted of being not only erroneous, but foolish.

He displayed, in a most eminent degree, the rare excellence of a perfect conception and expression of every thought, however rapid the succession. There were no half-formed ideas, no misty semblances of a meaning, no momentary lapses of intellect into an utterance at hazard, no sentences without a distinct object, and serving merely for the continuity of speaking; every sentiment had at once a palpable shape, and an appropriateness to the immediate purpose. If now and then, which was seldom, a word, or a part of a sentence, slightly failed to denote precisely the thing he intended, it was curious to observe how perfectly he was aware of it, and how he would instantly throw in an additional clause, which did signify it precisely. Another thing for curious observation was, that sometimes, in the middle of a sentence, or just as it came to an end, there would suddenly occur to him some required point of discrimination, some exception perhaps, or limitation, to the assertion he was in the act of making; or at another time, a circumstance of reinforcement extraneously suggested, a transient ray, as it were, from a foreign and distant object; and then he would, at the prompting of the moment, intimate the qualifying reference in a brief parenthesis in the sentence, or by a reverting glance at the end of it.—In these last lines of the description, I have in view the more closely intellectual parts of his public exercises, the parts employed in the ascertainment and elucidation of truth. There will be occasion, towards the close of these notices, to attribute some defect of discrimination and caution to other parts or qualities of his sermons.

a degree of favour with many, to whom so intellectual a preacher would not otherwise have been acceptable; it was this that reconciled persons of simple piety and little cultivated understanding. Many who might follow him with very imperfect apprehension and satisfaction through the preceding parts, could *reckon* on being warmly interested at the latter end. In that part his utterance acquired a remarkable change of intonation, expressive of his own excited feelings.

It were superfluous to say that Mr. Hall's powerful reasoning faculty, and his love and habit of reasoning, went into his preaching; but I may be allowed to observe, that the argumentative tenour thence prevailing through it, was of a somewhat different modification from the reasoning process exhibited in the composition of some of the most distinguished sermon writers. To say that he had much, very much, of the essence and effect of reasoning without its forms, will perhaps be considered as unqualified praise. Certainly we have a good riddance in the obsoleteness of the cumbrous and barbarous technicalities of logic in use among schoolmen, and of which traces remain in the works of some of our old divines, especially of the polemic class. But, divested of every sort of technicality, a natural and easy logic (easy, I mean, for the hearers' or readers' apprehension) may pervade a discourse in such manner, that it shall have more of the consistence of a contexture than of an accumulation. The train of thinking may preserve a link of connexion by the dependence of the following thought on the foregoing; that succeeding thought not only being just in itself and pertinent to the matter in hand, but being so still more specially in virtue of resulting, by obvious deduction, or necessary continuation, from the preceding; thus at once giving and receiving force by the connexion. It is of great advantage for the strength of a discourse, when it is so conceived as to require the not unfrequent recurrence of the signs, "for," "because,"

"if—then," "consequently," "so that," and the other familiar logical marks of conjunction and dependence in the series of ideas.

This will not be mistaken to mean any thing like a long uninterrupted process, as in a mathematical demonstration, carried on in a rigorous strictness of method and with a dependence of the validity of some one final result on the correctness of each and every movement in the long operation. No lengthened courses of deduction are required or admissible in popular instruction; the discourse must, at no distant intervals, come to pauses and changes, introducing matters of argument and illustration which are chosen by the preacher for their general pertinence and effectiveness to the subject, rather than by any strict logical rule of continuity; and he is not required to answer a captious question of a disciple of the schools whether this topic, and this again, be in the most exact line of sequence with the foregoing. It is sufficient that there be an obvious *general* relation, connecting the successive portions of the discourse; so that each in the succession shall take along with it the substantial effect of the preceding. But through the extent of each of these portions, the course of thinking might be conducted in a certain order of consecutive dependence, which should make the thoughts not merely to coincide, but to verify and authenticate one another while they coincide, in bearing on the proposed object. And such a mode of working them into evidence and application, would give them a closer grapple on the mind.

There will be testimony to this from the experience of readers conversant with the best examples; for instance, the sermons of South, which, glaringly censurable as many of them are on very grave accounts, are admirable for this linked succession, this passing to a further idea by *consequence* from the preceding, and not merely by that principle of relation between them, that they both tend to the same effect. Yet, at the same time, so far is he from exhibiting a cold dry argument, like Clarke in his sermons, that his ratiocination is abundantly charged with what may be called the matter of passion; often

indeed malicious and fierce, sometimes solemnly impressive; at all events serving to show that strong argument may be worked in fire as well as in frost.* It has always appeared to me, that Mr. Hall's discourses would have had one more ingredient of excellence, if the rich and strong production of thought, while pressing, as it always did, with an united impulse toward the point in view, had been drawn out in a sequence of more express and palpable dependence and concatenation. The conjunction of the ideas would sometimes appear to be rather that of contiguity than of implication. The successive sentences would come like separate independent dictates of intellect, the absence of which would indeed have been a loss to the general force, but not a breach of connexion. It must be observed, however, that when special occasions required it, he would bring into exercise the most severe logic in the most explicit form. Many fine examples of this are found in his controversy on Terms of Communion. And such would, at times, occur in his sermons.

Every cultivated hearer must have been struck with admiration of the preacher's mastery of language, a refractory servant to many who have made no small efforts to command it. I know not whether he sometimes painfully felt its deficiency and untowardness for his purpose; but it *seemed* to answer all his requirements, whether for cutting nice discriminations, or presenting abstractions in a tangible form, or investing grand subjects with splendour, or imparting a pathetic tone to expostulation, or inflaming the force of invective, or treating common topics without the insipidity of common-place diction. His language in the pulpit was hardly ever colloquial, but neither was it of an artificial cast. It was generally as little *bookish* as might consist with an uniformly sustained and serious style. Now and then there would be a scholastic term beyond the popular understanding, so

* Among others, I might name Stillingfleet's sermons, as exemplifying this manner of connexion in the series of ideas. If reference were made to ancient eloquence, Demosthenes would be cited as the transcendent example of this excellence.

familiar to himself, from his study of philosophers and old divines, as to be the first word occurring to him in his rapid delivery. Some conventional phrases which he was in the habit of using (for instance, "to usher in," "to give birth to," &c.), might better have been exchanged for plain unfigurative verbs. His language in preaching, as in conversation, was in one considerable point better than in his well-known and elaborately composed sermons, in being more natural and flexible. When he set in reluctantly upon that operose employment, his style was apt to assume a certain processional stateliness of march, a rhetorical rounding of periods, a too frequent inversion of the natural order of the sentence, with a morbid dread of degrading it to end in a particle or other small looking word; a structure in which I doubt whether the augmented appearance of strength and dignity be a compensation for the sacrifice of a natural, living, and variable freedom of composition. A remarkable difference will be perceived between the highly-wrought sermons long since published, and the short ones inserted in the fifth volume, which were written without a thought of the press; a difference to the advantage of the latter in the grace of simplicity.* Both in his conversation and his public speaking, there was often, besides and beyond the merit of clearness, precision, and brevity, a certain felicity of diction; something which, had it not been common in his discourse, would have appeared the special *good luck* of falling without care of selection on the aptest words, cast in elegant combination, and producing an effect of beauty even when there was nothing expressly ornamental.

From the pleasure there is in causing and feeling surprise by the exaggeration of what *is* extraordinary into something absolutely marvellous, persons of Mr. Hall's acquaintance, especially in his earlier life, have taken great license of fiction in stories of his extemporaneous eloquence. It was not uncommon to have an admired

* I may refer, also, to the *reported* sermons given in the sixth volume of his Works; as to many of which any observant hearer of Mr. Hall will testify, though he should not have heard those particular sermons, that they very faithfully represent the preacher's extemporaneous diction.

sermon asserted to have been thrown off in an emergency on the strength of an hour's previous study. This matter has been set right in Dr. Gregory's curious and interesting note (prefixed to the sermon on Modern Infidelity) describing the preacher's usual manner of preparation; and showing that it was generally made with deliberate care.* But whatever proportion of the discourse was from premeditation, the hearer could not distinguish that from what was extemporaneous. There were no periods betraying, by a mechanical utterance, a mere recitation. Every sentence had so much the spirit and significance of present immediate thinking, as to prove it a living dictate of the speaker's mind, whether it came in the way of recollection, or in the fresh production of the moment. And in most of his sermons, the more animated ones especially, a very large proportion of what he spoke must have been of this immediate origination; it was impossible that less than this should be the effect of the excited state of a mind so powerful in thinking, so extremely prompt in the use of that power, and in possession of such copious materials.

Some of his discourses were of a calm temperament nearly throughout; even these, however, never failing to end with a pressing enforcement of the subject. But in a considerable portion of them (a large one, it is said, during all but a late period of his life) he warmed into emotion before he had advanced through what might be called the discussion. The intellectual process, the explications, arguments, and exemplifications, would then be animated, without being confused, obscured, or too much dilated, by that more vital element which we denominate sentiment; while striking figures, at intervals, emitted a momentary brightness; so that the understanding, the passions, and the imagination of the hear-

* Once, in a conversation with a few friends who had led him to talk of his preaching, and to answer, among other questions, one respecting this supposed and reported extemporaneous production of the most striking parts of his sermons in the early period of his ministry, he surprised us by saying, that most of them, so far from being extemporaneous, had been so deliberately prepared that the words were selected, and the construction and order of the sentences adjusted.

ers, were all at once brought under command, by a combination of the forces adapted to seize possession of each. The spirit of such discourses would grow into intense fervour, even before they approached the conclusion. The preacher had the great advantage for popular eloquence, of a temperament which permitted and prompted the emanation of his whole soul in public; not partaking, in the least, of the feeling which, whether of natural reserve or from secluded habits of life, may have had a repressive and cooling effect on some men's public addresses—a feeling as if some of the emotions of piety belonged too intimately and personally to the individual's own mind alone, or to the communications of a few congenial friends, to be committed to the imperfect sympathies of a large promiscuous assembly. When he became animated with his subject all the recesses of his mind appeared to open; all his emotions, affections, passions, were given forth in the most unreserved and unrestrained effusion.

In the most admired of his sermons, and invariably in all his preaching, there was one excellence, of a moral kind, in which few eloquent preachers have ever equalled, and none ever did or will surpass him. It was so remarkable and obvious, that the reader (if having been also a hearer of Mr. Hall) will have gone before me when I name—oblivion of self. The preacher appeared wholly absorbed in his subject, given up to its possession, as the single actuating principle and impulse of the mental achievement which he was as if unconsciously performing:—*as if* unconsciously; for it is impossible it could be literally so; yet his absorption was so evident, there was so clear an absence of every betraying sign of vanity, as to leave no doubt that reflection on himself, the tacit thought, "It is I that am displaying this excellence of speech," was the faintest action of his mind. His auditory were sure that it was in relation to his subject, and not to himself, that he regarded the feelings with which they might hear him.

What a contrast to divers showy and admired orators, whom the reader will remember to have seen in the pulpit elsewhere! For who has not witnessed, perhaps more times than a few, a pulpit exhibition, which unwittingly told that the speaker was in resolute competition with his sacred theme for precedence in the favour of his auditory? Who has not observed the glimmer of a self-complacent smile, partly reflected as it were, on his visage, from the plausible visages confronting him, and partly lighted from within, by the blandishment of a still warmer admirer? Who has not seen him swelling with a tone and air of conscious importance in some specially *fine* passage; prolonging it, holding it up, spreading out another and yet another scarlet fold, with at last a temporary stop to survey the assembly, as challenging their tributary looks of admiration, radiating on himself, or interchanged among sympathetic individuals in the congregation? Such a preacher might have done well to become a hearer for a while;—if indeed capable of receiving any corrective instruction from an example of his reverse; for there have been instances of preachers actually spoiling themselves still worse in consequence of hearing some of Mr. Hall's eloquent effusions; assuming, beyond their previous sufficiency of such graces, a vociferous declamation, a forced look of force, and a tumour of verbiage, from unaccountable failure to perceive, or to make a right use of the perception, that his sometimes impetuous delivery, ardent aspect, and occasionally magnificent diction, were all purely spontaneous from the strong excitement of the subject.

Under that excitement, when it was the greatest, he did unconsciously acquire a corresponding elation of attitude and expression; would turn, though not with frequent change, toward the different parts of the assembly, and, as almost his only peculiarity of action, would make one step back from his position (which, however, was instantly resumed) at the last word of a climax; an action which inevitably suggested the idea of the recoil of heavy ordnance.* I mention so inconsiderable a cir-

* In sermons plainly and almost exclusively exegetical, or in which bodily disorder repressed his characteristic energy, he would often keep nearly one posture, looking straight forward, during the whole service. At all times, his gesture was clear of every trace of art and intention.

cumstance, because I think it has somewhere lately been noticed with a hinted imputation of vanity. But to the feeling of his constant hearers, the cool and hypercritical equally with the rest, it was merely one of those effects which emotion always produces in the exterior in one mode or another, and was accidentally become associated with the rising of his excitement to its highest pitch, just at the sentence which decisively clenched an argument, or gave the last strongest emphasis to an enforcement. This action never occurred but when there *was* a special emphasis in what he said.

Thus the entire possession and actuation of his mind by his subject, evident in every way, was especially so by two signs: First; that his delivery was simply and unconsciously governed by his mind. When it was particularly animated, or solemn, or pathetic, or indignant, it was such, not by rule, intention, or any thought of rhetorical fitness; but in involuntary accordance with the strain of the thought and feeling. In this sense, he "spake as he was moved;" and consequently nothing in his manner of delivery was either out of the right place, or *in* it by studied adjustment.*

The other indication of being totally surrendered to the subject, and borne on by its impetus when the current became strong, was (in perfect contrast to what is described above) the rapid passing by, and passing away, of any striking sentiment or splendid image. He never

Indeed he had scarcely any thing of what is meant by gesticulation or action in the schools of oratory. It was what he never thought of for himself, and he despised its artificial exhibition in others, at least in preachers.

* I remember, at the distance of many years, with what a vivid feeling of the ludicrous he related an anecdote of a preacher, long since deceased, of some account in his day and connexion. He would, in preaching, sometimes weep, or seem to weep, when the people wondered why, as not perceiving in what he was saying any cause for such emotion, in the exact places where it occurred. After his death, one of his hearers, happening to inspect some of his manuscript sermons, exclaimed, "I have found the explanation; we used to wonder at the good Doctor's weeping with so little reason sometimes, as it seemed. In his sermons, there is written here and there in the margins, 'Cry here;' now I verily believe the Doctor sometimes mistook the place, and that was the cause of what appeared so unaccountable."

detained it in view by reduplications and amplifying phrases, as if he would not let it vanish so soon; as if he were enamoured of it, and wanted his hearers to be so for his sake; as if he wished to stand a while conspicuous by its lustre upon him. It glistened or flashed a moment and was gone.

The shining points were the more readily thus hastened away, as they intimately belonged to that which was passing. They occurred not as of arbitrary insertion, but with the appropriateness of a natural relation. However unexpectedly any brilliant idea might present itself, its impression was true and immediate to the purpose. Instead of arresting and diverting the attention to itself, as a thing standing out, to be separately admired for its own sake, it fell congenially into the train, and augmented without disturbing the effect. The fine passage would, indeed, in many instances, admit of being taken apart, and would in a detached state retain much of its beauty; but its greatest virtue was in animating the whole combination of sentiments. Mr. Hall's imagination always acted in direct subservience to his intellectual design.

A seriousness of spirit and manner was an invariable characteristic of his preaching, whatever were the topic, or occasion, or place; or preceding social intercourse, or temporary mood of his feelings. As his conversation often abounded with wit, in the strictest sense of the term, with the accompaniment of humour, both frequently playing into satire, in which he was not a little formidable, it has been justly wondered that nothing of this kind appeared in his sermons. I now wish I had ventured to ask him how this happened; whether it was that he had determined, on principle, to forbid himself all strokes and sparkles of that amusing faculty, as in every case detrimental to the effect of preaching; or that no witty turns or fancies did really ever occur to him during that exercise. However the case might be, all the repeaters of his witty vivacities and severities have forborne, as far as I ever heard, to report any one of them as a sentence of a sermon. No more than a single

instance is within my own recollection of any thing devious on this side from his accustomed tenour: it was a most biting sarcasm at the hypocritical cant of those wealthy persons who pretend a concern for the promotion of the Christian cause, but, under the affectation of a pious trust in Providence for that promotion, take good care to hold fast all but some parsimonious driblets of their money.

The absorbing seizure of his faculties by his subject, when it was prosecuted at uninterrupted length, carried him sometimes, I suspected, into a peculiar and extraordinary state of mind for a public speaker. It appeared to me not unfrequently, that his ideas pressed into his view so much in the character of living realities, that he lost all distinct sense of the presence of the congregation; so that he had for a while no more than a general and almost unconscious recognition of them as listening to him. His look at such times was that of a person so withdrawn to something within, that he is evidently taking no notice of what his eyes appear to fall upon. In confirmation that the case was so, I remember instances in which, being asked, after the service, whether he had not been grievously annoyed by an almost incessant and most thoughtlessly unrepressed coughing in many parts of the congregation, with other offensive and more voluntary noises, which had destroyed a third part at the least of his sentences for the hearing of a great proportion of the assembly, he said he had not been at all aware there was any such annoyance. It needs not to be observed, to those who have heard him, how necessary it was rendered by the defect of clear strong sound in his voice, when not forcibly exerted, that no other sounds should interfere.

At other times, however, he was in every sense present to his auditory, and spoke to them in pointed address; especially when a hortatory application at the end made them all feel that he was earnestly desirous to instruct, impress, and persuade. I may have occasion to advert again, with a somewhat different reference, to the circumstance of his mental abstraction.

It has been observed that he had the command of ample and various resources for illustration and proof. The departments from which he drew the least, might be the facts and philosophy of the material world. His studies had been directed with a strong and habitual preference to the regions of abstraction and metaphysics; and he furnished a fine example of the advantage which may be derived from such studies to the faculty for theological and moral discussions, by a mind at the same time too full of ardour, sentiment, and piety, to be cooled and dried into an indifference to every thing but the most disembodied and attenuated speculation. The advantage, as exemplified by him, of the practice and discipline of dealing with truth in the abstract, where a severe attention is required to apprehend it as a real subsistence, to see and grasp it, if I may so speak, in tangible forms, might be noted as twofold. First (that which has been anticipated in former remarks), the utmost precision in every thing he uttered. He could express each dictate of thought in perfect freedom from doubt whether it might not be equivocal; whether it might not be of loose import and vague direction, instead of strictly to the point; whether it might not involve some latent inconsistency within itself or in its immediate conjunction with another idea; whether it were exactly the very thing he intended. It was of complete formation in his understanding; it had its including line and limit, instead of being confused with something else. As it was once happily said by himself of Johnson, "he shone strongly on the angles of a thought." The consequence of his rigorous habits of thinking thus came with eminent value into discourse addressed and intelligible to ordinary good sense, where there was no obvious intervention of that refined speculation which was nevertheless contributing, in effect, so much to the clearness and strength of its consistence. The quality which might be called philosophic or metaphysic in the interior source, became a popular excellence in the result.

But secondly: besides the distinctness and precision

of all the particulars of thought in detail, that exercise of abstract speculation had brought him into possession and mastery of those general principles, in virtue of which these particular sentiments must have their authority. It is not at all necessary, in any ordinary course of instruction, to be continually tracing the particular back, for its verification, to the general; but it is a great advantage to be able to do so when it *is* necessary, as it sometimes will be. He could do this; he knew from what original truths could be deduced the varieties of sentiment which the speaker utters in unqualified assertion, as not liable to be questioned. Any of them, not self-evident, he could have abstracted into a proximate principle in a generalization, and that again resting on a still deeper or ultimate one. He had seen down to the basis, and therefore was confident of the firmness of what he stood upon; unlike a man who is treading on a surface which he perceives or suspects to be hollow, and is ignorant and fearful of what there may be underneath. Or, to change the figure, he could trace the minor outermost ramifications of truth downward into the larger stems; and those larger into the main trunk and the root. This conscious ability of the preacher, or any other discourser, to sustain upon first principles what he is advancing with the freedom of unhesitating assertion and assumption, will impart an habitual assurance of safety while he is expatiating thus in what may be called the outward, free, and popular exposition of his subject.

It is presumed that this representation of the use he made, in sermons, of his power and habits of abstract speculation, may suffice to prevent a notion, in the minds of any of our readers who may seldom or never have heard him, that he was in a specific sense a philosophical or metaphysical preacher. He did often indeed (and it was a distinguishing excellence equally of his talking, preaching, and writing) point to some general principle, and briefly and plainly show how it authorized an opinion. Occasionally, in a more than usually argumentative discourse, he would draw out a more extended deduction. He would also cite from the doctrines of philosophy, with lucid application, some law of the human mind (for instance, and especially that of association). But still it was far more a *virtual* than a formal result of his abstruser studies that pervaded his preaching.

His intimate acquaintance with many of the greatest authors, whom he had studied with a sentiment of reverence, and whose intellectual and religious wealth was largely drawn into his own capacious faculties, contributed to preclude an ostentation of originality. His sermons would make, on cultivated hearers, a general impression of something new, in the sense of being very different, by eminent superiority, from any common character of preaching; but the novelty would appear less to consist in absolute origination, than in the admirable power of selection and combination. It was not exhibited in a frequency of singularly bold prominent inventions, in the manner of the new mountains and islands sometimes suddenly thrown up on tracts of the globe; but rather in that whole construction of the performance by which the most appropriate topics, from whatever quarter, were brought into one array, were made imposing by aggregation, strong by unity of purpose, and often bright by felicitous apposition; in short, were so plastically ordered as to assume much of the character of a creation. It is probable that if his studies had been of slighter tenour, if his reading had been less, or more desultory, if his faculties had been suffered to run more loose, his discourses would have more abounded with ideas starting out, as it were singly, with an aspect like nothing ever seen before. His mental ground was cultivated too industriously and regularly for substantial produce, to leave room for those often beautiful wild flowers which spring spontaneously in a fertile half-wrought soil. His avowed indifference to poetry might be taken as one indication of a mind more adapted to converse with the substantialities of truth, than to raise phantoms of invention. Perhaps the most striking feature of his originality was seen in his talent (like the che-

mistry which brings a latent power into manifestation and action) of drawing from some admitted principle a hitherto unthought-of inference, which affects the whole argument of a question, and leads to a conclusion either new or by a new road.

While he availed himself in his sermons of the powers and means of reason, he constantly referred, I believe with an increased explicitness in the more advanced periods of his ministry, to Revelation as the supreme and final authority. No preacher, or writer on subjects of divinity, was ever more faithful to the principle that all doctrines professing to be christian, must, both in their statement and proof, be founded on the Scriptures, whatever further light or corroboration they may admit from independent reason, or from matter of fact. It is understood that it cost him, at an early season of his life, a great effort, with respect to some particular opinions, to subdue his speculative disposition to such an uncompromising submission to that authority, as to renounce not only the presumptions which place themselves in contravention to the Scriptures, but all the expedients of a forced or evasive interpretation of them. But the submission became absolute and perpetual; and in this spirit he maintained through life so assiduous a practice of studying the Bible, that he acquired a remarkable facility for citing from every part of it, in the course of his preaching, the passages most pertinent for evidence or enforcement of whatever he was advancing. It would often strike the hearers that probably no texts could have been found in the whole book more exactly to the purpose. Though he studied the Scriptures critically, he was sparing of learned criticism in the pulpit; never resorted to it but when he saw a question of some importance involved in a right or wrong construction or interpretation; and then with the greatest possible brevity. In some few of the instances he might seem to rest too much of the weight of an argument on the acceptation of a single insulated expression; for he was not, from his ability to bring a copious induction of texts in proof of a doctrine, the less tenacious of any and

every one which he thought could be vindicated for an assertion or implication of it by a correct interpretation.

In his choice of subjects, a prevailing desire to do good directed him most frequently to those, or to select parts and views of those, that present themselves as of chief importance on the common field of christianity. When he took what appeared an insulated subject, of a peculiar and perhaps somewhat curious cast, he would seldom fail, while illustrating it in a manner appropriate to itself, to bring it at last, and by an unforced incidence, to coalesce with or merge in some grand generality or cardinal doctrine of christian faith. This method contributed to maintain a consistency in the doctrine and tendency of his diversified ministrations.

He insisted with the utmost emphasis on the principle that christianity, instead of being merely a circumstantial modification, or clearer exposition, or augmented sanction, or supplemental adjunct of religion, conceived as in its original subsistence in the relation between the Creator and a race not involved in moral evil, is an absolutely distinct and peculiar economy, appointed for a race that *is* in that disastrous condition, and constituted upon the essentially altered relation, the relation between man as a depraved guilty being and his Maker. In his judgment, any theory which does not acknowledge christianity in this express character, positively rejects it; with the guilt, to him who dares this rejection, of insulting the Almighty, and the calamity of being self-doomed to meet the righteous Judge on an interdicted ground, a fatal ground, therefore, where justice will be apart from mercy. From his conviction of the importance of this principle of the peculiarity of the christian economy, he brought continually in view the doctrines which *constitute* its peculiarity. The scheme of mediation; the Mediator's character, in the various views and lights in which it can be displayed, of dignity and humiliation, of majesty and benignity; his vicarious sacrifice for the atonement of sin; were the subjects of his very marked and habitual preference. On the last of them

he enlarged in such extent and frequency, that, with the same perfect conviction as himself of its vital and transcendent importance, I sometimes thought there was hardly a due proportion yielded to the correlative subjects—to that extent and peremptoriness of the requirements of the divine law, that condition of the human nature, that actual existence and stupendous amount of guilt, which are the *cause* that there is a *necessity* for an atonement.

His practice, just noticed, of prosecuting the discussion of particular subjects, while in a manner strictly appropriate to each as a separate theme, yet also with a bearing toward an ultimate combination with some essential principle of Christianity, conduced to keep almost constantly in view the evangelical principles, those which are peculiarly characteristic of the mediatorial economy; for these were very commonly the points to which the various courses of thought running through his different sermons were made to tend, and where they fell in confluence.

His system of theological tenets (*creed* is an ill-favoured term) was strictly orthodox, on the model of what has come to be denominated Moderate Calvinism. With the other conspicuous points, the doctrine of the Trinity,* the divinity of Christ, the atonement, and justification by faith alone, he held the more distinctively Calvinistic doctrine of predestination; though I cannot answer for the precise terms in which he would have stated it; but I presume he would have accepted those employed in the articles of the Church of England. In preaching he very rarely made any express reference to that doctrine, and his recognition of it by implication was too indistinct for toleration from the rigidly Calvinistic hearers of any preacher not privileged by talents and public favour to bear down all censorial pretensions.

Under our total ignorance of divine decrees, our ignorance of all but the *general* purpose of the Almighty in the promulgation of the gospel, he considered that men are to be addressed as rational beings, on subjects of which, unless they will practically renounce that property of their nature, they must apprehend the vast importance; subjects which, as well as appealing to their coolest reason, ought to be of mighty force to press on the conscience and the passions; to which it were, consequently, the last absurdity to decline summoning that reason, and arousing those passions. He was therefore exempt from all those restrictions, in respect to the mode of presenting and urging the overtures of redemption, which have been imposed on some good men of the Calvinistic faith by a concern for systematic consistency. He took the utmost liberty in this strain of inculcation; exhorting, inviting, entreating, expostulating, remonstrating; in language of nearly the same tenour as that which might be employed by an Arminian preacher; with the exception, of course, of that notion of free-will, which recurs with such laborious iteration in the preaching of that order, and which was excluded from his faith equally by theological and philosophical reasons. This non-advertence in his sermons to the Calvinistic tenet, was not from any secret consciousness that the belief of it is essentially incongruous with an unrestrained freedom of inculcation; it was not that he might enjoy a license for inconsistency through the device of keeping one or two incompatible things out of sight; but he judged that neither the doctrine itself, nor the process of reasoning to prove the belief of it consistent with the most unrestricted language of exhortation, could be made a profitable part of popular instruction. He deemed it authority enough for his practice, independently of all abstracted reasoning on the subject, that he had the example of the divinely inspired preachers urging the demands of the gospel on the unbelievers and the wicked, in the most unmeasured terms of exhortation, the predestinating decrees of heaven set out of the question; and that in modern experience it is a notorious fact, that those preachers of the Calvinistic school (for one memorable

* An exception is to be made in this article for an opinion at one time held by him, and, in one of his letters, I think, named by him *Dualism*, but surrendered long before the decline of his life. That opinion was, that the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as a divine energy, or agency, instead of a personal subsistence.

example, Whitfield) who have nevertheless availed themselves of this freedom to the utmost extent, have been far beyond all comparison more successful in effecting the great object of preaching, than those who have, somewhat presumptuously, charged themselves with so much responsibility respecting the unknown determination of the Almighty, that they must not call men indiscriminately to faith and repentance lest they should contravene his sovereign purposes;—I might say, rather, forfeit the dignity of coinciding with them.

Perhaps it would not have been expected from Mr. Hall's great capacity, that he should be habitually indisposed to dwell or expatiate long near the borders of the remoter, darker tracts, of the regions of religious contemplation. Such, however, appears to have been the fact. If the cause were inquired, undoubtedly one thing that withheld or withdrew him was, a consideration of usefulness, a preference for what was most adapted to be beneficial to his own religious discipline and to the best interests of others. He was amply informed and warned, by his knowledge of the history of philosophy and theology, of the mischiefs of a restless, presumptuous, interminable speculation, a projection of thought, beyond the limits of ascertainable truth. But there was a cause more radical in his mental constitution. That constitution was not predominantly either imaginative or contemplative; it was *intellectual*, in the strictest sense; in the (perhaps arbitrary) sense, that the matter of his speculations must be what he could distinctly understand, what he could survey in such form and order as to admit of propositions and reasons; so that the speculative process lost its interest with him if carried into a direction, or if exceeding the limit, where it could no longer be subjected to the methods of proof; in other words, where it ceased to comprehend and reason, and turned into conjecture, sentiment, and fancy. He seemed to have no ambition to stretch out his intellectual domain to an extent which he could not occupy and traverse, with some certainty of his movements and measurements. His sphere was very wide, expanded to one circle beyond another, at each of which in succession he left other men behind him, arrested by the impassable line; but he was willing to perceive, and even desirous to verify, his own ultimate boundary; and when he came to the barrier where it was signified to him, "Thus far, and no further," he stopped, with apparently much less of an impulse than might have been expected in so strong a spirit, to seek an outlet, and attempt an irruption into the dubious realms beyond.

With a mind so constituted and governed, he was less given than many other men of genius have been to those visionary modes of thought; those musings exempt from all regulation; that impatience of aspiration to reach the vast and remote; that fascination of the mysterious, captivating by the very circumstance of eluding; that fearful adventuring on the dark, the unknown, the awful; "those thoughts that wander through eternity," which have often been at once the luxury and the pain of imaginative and highly endowed spirits, discontented with their assigned lot in this tenebrious world. No doubt, in his case, piety would have interfered to restrain such impatience of curiosity, or audacity of ambitious thinking, or indignant strife against the confines of our present allotment, as would have risen to a spirit of insubordination to the divine appointment. And possibly there were times when this interference was required; but still the structure of his faculties, and the manner of employing them to which it determined him, contributed much to exempt him from that passion to go beyond the mortal sphere which would irreligiously murmur at the limitation. His acquiescence did not seem at least to cost him a strong effort of repression.

This distinction of his intellectual character was obvious in his preaching. He was eminently successful on subjects of an elevated order, which he would expand and illustrate in a manner which sustained them to the high level of their dignity. This carried him near some point of the border of that awful darkness which encompasses, on all sides, our little glimmering field of knowledge; and then it might be seen how aware he was of

his approach, how cautiously, or shall I say instinctively? he was held aloof, how sure not to abandon the ground of evidence, by a hazardous incursion of conjecture or imagination into the unknown. He would indicate how near, and in what direction, lay the shaded frontier; but dared not, did not seem even tempted, to invade its "majesty of darkness."

This procedure, in whatever proportion owing to his intellectual temperament, or to the ascendancy of religion, will be pronounced wise for a *general* practice. If, however, he could have allowed himself in some degree of exception, it would have been gratifying to a portion of his hearers. There are certain mysterious phenomena in the moral economy of our world, which compel, and will not release, the attention of a thoughtful mind, especially if of a gloomy constitutional tendency. Wherever it turns, it still encounters their portentous aspect; often feels arrested and fixed by them as under some potent spell; making an effort, still renewed and still unavailing, to escape from the appalling presence of the vision. Now it was conceived, that a strenuous deliberate exertion of a power of thought like his, after he had been so deeply conversant with important and difficult speculations, might perhaps have contributed something to alleviate this oppression. Not, of course, that it should be dreamed that his, or any still stronger human intelligence, should be able to penetrate with light, the black clouds which overshadow our system. But it was imagined possible for such force of reason to impart somewhat of an extenuating quality to the *medium* through which they are beheld, and through which they might then be beheld with a less painful and total prostration of spirit. It might have been an invaluable service, it was thought, if his whole strength and resources had been applied to display comprehensively the nature, the extent, the solidity, of the ground on which faith may rest with a firm confidence in the goodness of the sovereign Governor, notwithstanding all the strange and awful phenomena of our economy.*

* It may be mentioned, in further explanation of the indisposition noted above, that in spite of the long and often severe persecution of bodily pain, his temperament was cheerful and buoyant. He had a remarkable facility of finding or making sources and occasions of pleasurable feeling, and averting his mind from gloomy subjects; insomuch that he appeared to be, even on the mere strength of this temperament, much less subject than might have been expected of so enlarged a capacity of thought, to be invaded by the dark and fearful forms which those subjects can assume.

This disinclination to adventure into the twilight of speculation was shown in respect to subjects of less formidable mystery, of solemn indeed, but rather attractive than overawing character. For instance, the mode, the condition, of that conscious existence after death, of which, as a fact, he was so zealous an assertor against the dreary dogma which consigns the soul to insensibility in the separate state; if indeed it *be* any existent state of an intelligence when all we know of its attributes is abolished. It would have been gratifying, and might have been beneficial for serious impression, to see some gleams of his vigorous thought thrown upon the border of that scene of our destiny, so obscure, but at the same time so near, and of transcendent interest; to see the reserved and scattered intimations of the sacred oracles brought into combination, and attempted to be reduced to something approaching to the form of a theory; to see how far any conjectural imaginations could be accompanied by reasons from analogy, and any other principle of probability; with a citation, perhaps, of certain of the least arbitrary and fanciful of the visions of other inquisitive speculators, commented on as he would have commented. But he did not appear to partake of the intense curiosity with which the inquiries and poetical musings of some pious men have been carried into the subject. He seemed, beyond what might have been expected in relation to a matter which lies across the whole breadth of our prospect, and so closely at hand, content to let it remain a *terra incognita* till the hour that puts an end to conjecture. It will be understood that this is mentioned, not with any meaning of animadversion, but as exemplifying that peculiarity of his mental character by which he appeared disinclined to pursue any inquiries beyond

the point where substantial evidence fails. The regret of some of his hearers was, that he should not oftener be willing to exert his whole strength to try whether that point be really fixed where it appears and is assumed to be. They would have been gratified to see him undertaking sometimes the discussion of subjects, which they would have deprecated any attempt upon by men of ordinary ability. While so superior a mental engine, if I may be allowed the expression, was in their hands, they wished they could *make the most* of its powers.

I have deferred to the last some additional observations, which I shall attempt with considerable difficulty; partly from a doubt whether I may be able to render them plainly intelligible; and partly from apprehension that they may not please some of those who most admired Mr. Hall; of whose talents, however, no man's admiration was higher than mine.

The general purport of what I would say is this, that while his preaching was superlatively excellent in many of its qualities, it was not, from a defect in certain important ones, the best adapted for salutary efficacy. A short indication of what I would allege would be, that it was too general and theoretic, neglectful too often of the required *conditions of application*, the distinctions, exceptions, qualifications; in other words, of the casuistry in which every subject of a practical nature is involved; that it presented things too much in unbroken breadth and mass; that it was apt to exceed, in the most eloquent parts, the allowed license of exaggerations; that it was not kept in due relation to the realities of life; that, while it was most excellent in the discrimination of topics, sentiments, arguments, it did not discriminate and individualize human characters; that therefore it did not maintain an intimate commerce with the actual condition of the hearers.

It were superfluous to repeat how pre-eminently he displayed, in the perspicuous and convincing statement, developement, and confirmation of truth, the primary excellence of preaching, as it is of all instruction; or how earnestly the practical interest of the doctrine, in its

general bearing, at least, was often enforced toward the conclusion of his sermons. The defect, which, nevertheless, I am wishing to mark as not excluded by such rare merit, was, that (as a general fact, and with exceptions) his preaching did not bring and keep the people under a closely *disciplinary* process. It allowed them too much of the privilege of the spectators of a fine and well ordered series of representation, of such a nature that they can look on at ease from any similar disturbance to that of the king in Hamlet, at the sight of the acted garden scene.

A consideration of the whole design of preaching might suggest something approaching to a model of what would seem the most probably calculated to attain its several ends, in combination to one grand purpose. We may regard the preacher as holding a kind of comprehensive jurisdiction over the spiritual and moral condition of the congregation, who are a mingled assemblage of all varieties of that condition. Should not then, the best mode of ministration, for beneficial effect, be that which applies itself to this condition, not only either generally in the mass, or as viewed in the two divisions of religious and irreligious, but also with a special recognition of those varieties?

There needs not here be said so self-evident a thing as that the great primary truths, forming, if I may express it so, *the constitution* of religion, should be carefully and amply set forth; that, in a word, the *theory* of Christianity as a whole, and in its principal branches, should be kept conspicuous in the people's view. But while the principles of which the Christian faith consists are to be often stated and constantly recognised, as the general ground-work of all that belongs to religion, what a large account there is of more special matters, on which, and on each of which, it is most important to call men's reason and conscience into exercise. There are the various causes, distinguishable and assignable ones, which frustrate the exhibition of religious truth, and may be so commented on as to show *how* they frustrate it. There is the sad catalogue of the perversities and deceits of the

heart; there are the distortions and presumptions of prejudice; the principles which, in disguised form perhaps, and afraid of audacious avowal, but of malignant essence, react against the divine authority; the subterfuges of insincerity; the various ways in which men evade conviction, falsify in effect the truth to which they assent in terms, or delude themselves in their estimates of their own spirit and conduct. There is the estrangement from reflection, the extreme reluctance to honest self-examination. There is also, in the majority of any large congregation, many of those who make a direct profession of personal religion not excepted, an indistinct apprehension, and a lax application, of the principles and rules of Christian morality. These last, together with the state of men's notions and habits in relation to them, are within the province of the religious instructor; unless the universally, cogently, and even minutely perceptive character of revelation be a grand impertinence.

It is of the utmost importance that things like these should occupy a large space in the ministration. They claim to be made the subject of the preacher's best exertion, to show what they are, by illustrations verified upon the actual state of human beings, and how they interfere with religion in all its doctrines and applications. Any one of these here noted comprehends a whole class of particulars, important enough to be, each of them separately, a matter of the most useful discussion for the longest sermon. And if this be true, the majority of the evangelical teachers of our congregations seem very far from being aware (in respect especially to what belongs to the moral department of the great Christian school) of the extent of either the resources or the duties of their office.

But besides the propriety of discoursing on such things formally and at large, there is a valuable use to be made of them in a secondary and more incidental way, by adverting to them, any of them, as the case may suggest, in short and pointed reference, when any lesson of the religious discipline can by means of them be more strongly fastened on men's minds; on minds, which will play

loose from its hold if such expedients be not employed to strike and grasp them. Through whatever subject (except the most exclusively speculative) the Christian instructor can direct his course, considerations relating to such matters are, some or other of them, near at hand, to admonish him of something which is to be taken account of, or he is debarred from obtaining possession of the inner man. And therefore it would be well that, instead of passing by these considerations unnoticed, and prosecuting with exclusive attention the pure *rationale* of his subject, he should admit them to interfere with his progress, should implicate such of them as lie nearest to his track with the train of his observations; sometimes with a short interruption and suspension of that train, in order to take in and insist on an accessory consideration which may turn the subject with a more special pointedness on the hearers than would be done by its strictly regular prosecution. He might thus, without losing sight of the *general* objects of his discourse, give it a particularity, a pressure at critical points, a distinctness of arrest on the attention and conscience.

Now Mr. Hall had, both by the cast of his mind and his addiction to prolonged speculative studies, an inaptitude to such a manner of preaching. His subject took the form of an intellectual theme, homogeneous, continuous, and nowhere allowing a diversion from its order, or a breaking up among its topics to turn any of them for a few moments to a peculiar and insulated use; or admitting the intervention of any thing which would bring the progress to a stand. The channel of his thoughts was so straight on, and the current so full and rapid, that there could be no refluxes and eddies. He entered on his subject with a clear prospect over it to the end; the interest, to himself, of his movement in prosecution of it, was in throwing his mind still forward on the next succeeding part, with a propulsion augmented by each as he passed through it; and he would have been impatient of any thing that should check or turn aside his career. He could not remit and draw in, to stay awhile, so to speak, with some one important observation, to give it

individually an aggravated stress, to kindle it into an intense light, deliberately held close to the minds before him, penetrating to the recesses as a trial of the spirit, revealing unsuspected, or but slightly suspected, qualities in the feelings, the motives, the habits; and indicating unthought-of relations between these and the principles of Christianity, the rules of duty, or the conditions of safety. Still pressing vigorously onward, he could not make a pause to revert unexpectedly on what he had just said; and by an appeal to the hearers for its truth, or by a brief strong inference from it, render it more impressive than it could be as hastily passing away. He could not abate his movement so as to address them with a pointed interrogation, solemn or familiar in a manner as if waiting for a reply; thus breaking in upon any tendency there might be to their yielding themselves to be carried along in a pleasing reverie of admiration and vague assent; drawing them into something like a mental dialogue with him on the point, and awaking them to reflect whether they should make, or were making, any application of it to themselves. That extraordinary degree of withdrawment from recognition of the local scene, when his mind was in its full race, which has been noticed before rather as a circumstance of manner than as affecting the character of his preaching, contributed much to what is here attempted to be described. He did feel, I repeat, a benevolent interest for the congregation, as a *general* sentiment, and at times it would manifest itself expressly and even pathetically; but I still deem it a fact, that during a large proportion of his public exercise, and especially in the seasons of highest excitement, *the subject itself*, in its own absorbing possession of him, was the grand interest. It was by *that* that he was filled, elated, and borne along, with no more than a very general consciousness of being in communication with an auditory. The train of his thoughts, therefore, swept on at a certain altitude, as it were, in the air, rather than proceeded on a level and in contact with the people, in a series of arresting inculcations and inquisitions.

I have said that he did not *individualize* human characters. While he had a deep insight into the structure of human nature as a species, his preaching would sometimes have suggested the remark that was made on a certain philosopher, that "he understood *man*, but not *men*"—I say, his *preaching*; for a different apprehension was received from his conversation. He had been acquainted less or more with a very extensive variety of persons, including most of the differences seen in society; had a remarkably exact remembrance of them; and showed, by his characteristic descriptions and anecdotes, that he was not a superficial, though he was not a studiously intentional, observer. At all times he was interested by facts, witnessed or related, which exemplified a common property, or a peculiar modification, of this strange nature of ours. It was therefore a cause of wonder, notwithstanding all that was so apparent of his habits of abstraction and generalization, that so many forms of the good and evil of humanity, accumulated within the ample magazine of his materials, should not be brought into service, divested, of course, of the peculiarities that would betray individual portraiture, and a little idealized into representatives of classes, but still of such genuine living features, that the people might recognise them as things in actual existence. Forms of character thus discriminately shaped from matter of fact, would stand forth exposing what human nature is, not merely as a *general* subject for religious and moral treatment, but also in those special modifications to which the discipline should be applied. It may then be applied with a peculiar, and, in the hands of an able man, a striking appropriateness; it will be seen to be fitted to the part: and there can be no question whether its force and probable efficacy will be much in proportion to this evidently specific pertinence. By this practice he who is desirous that truth may strike, stands much nearer to his mark, leaving less room for the shaft to pass harmlessly by in a slanting direction, than if he took a general aim from a distance. Let the blended mass of human character be thus resolved into classes, not so small certainly that the

address, in order to be appropriate to each, must be frittered into minute and almost trifling particulars, yet so circumscribed that it may bear on each in one definite manner, and many persons will be made to find their own place, and find themselves brought to account, who would remain quite at their ease under a theoretic generality in the administration of the religious and moral jurisdiction; who might even approve and applaud the very lecture by which they were arraigned and condemned, in perfect impunity from any whisper of the admonition, "Thou art the man." It was to be regretted that the singularly compact conformation, and the speculative and abstract propensity, of Mr. Hall's mind, should so much have precluded his great talents and excellent purpose from this resource for augmenting the efficacy of preaching. It might be anticipated from the nature of the case, and it was verified by observation, that too many of the attendants witnessed some of the brightest displays rather with the feeling of looking at a fine picture than of being confronted by a faithful mirror; and went away equally pleased with a preacher that was so admirable, and with themselves for having the intelligence and taste to admire him.*

* A little circumstance, told me a day or two after his last sermon, which was considered of signal intellectual power, and which I have always regretted that I was prevented hearing, may not improperly be mentioned as somewhat in point to what is attempted in these paragraphs. The subject was the sin and absurdity of covetousness. After the service, one of the hearers observed to another, "An admirable sermon—yet why was *such* a sermon preached? For probably not one person in the congregation, though it is not wanting in examples of the vice in question, would take the discourse as at all applicable to himself."—The preacher had employed his whole force on the love of money *as a pure and absolute principle*. The person who made the remark meant to say, that hardly any one will acknowledge to be, or indeed is *conscious* of being, actuated by this pure absolute principle, however tenacious of his money, or insatiably grasping at more. No; the passion enslaves and befools him under secondary and more plausible forms. He wishes to have the means of setting his family advantageously forward in the world; he says so, and thinks so, even though possibly unwilling to do any thing for them as yet. It is desirable to have the means of maintaining a respectable station in society. It is gratifying to be looked up to with the deference universally shown to wealth. Perhaps the man has had experience of straitened circumstances in early life, and cannot make too sure against its recurrence. There is much liability to hazard and losses, and it is prudent to be well provided. It would be a miserable thing to suffer penury in old age.—Now, an invective against the love of money, to be practically useful, would seize and expose it in those modes of its operation, under which it hides or palliates its true quality, and beguiles out of all self-suspicion the most desperate idolater of Mammon. A lecture on covetousness, which should concentrate its whole rebuke on the love of money taken abstractedly, might even do mischief; for every hearer who could say he did not *so* love money, would confidently infer, that therefore he was not guilty of covetousness.

There was cause for observation on his manner of placing in contrast the two great divisions, the righteous and the wicked, christians and men of the world. There should be some essential test of the difference; but then what to do with all those appearances among the professedly better class, which betray so much likeness, after all to the worse? Nothing can be more perplexing to a thoughtful beholder of men as they are, who, in disregard of all system, *must* take these signs for what they plainly import; and what they plainly import is, that whatever be the essentially distinguishing principle of the separation, there are, in numbers whom he may not in a judgement of charity pronounce to be no Christians, many grievous and habitual approximations to those who confessedly are none. At times, the whole subject will almost assume under his view, the appearance of an affair of *gradation*, from the maximum on one side, and the minimum on the other, divided by no wide interval at the point of approach. If he be a public teacher of religion, and in that capacity under a solemn responsibility for the estimates to be entertained of the Christian character, and of themselves, by his hearers, he will have a severe exercise for his caution and discrimination. He may overlook, if he will, the unhappy mixture and competition of evil with the good in the better division of actual human characters; and indulge himself in the pleasure of constructing and setting up an image, not like that visionary one, from whose golden head there was a deterioration of materials downward to the baseness of clay, but wholly of gold, the *ideal* of all the Christian graces and virtues assembled in harmony and perfection. But to what end? Is it that the people,

when they recover themselves to consideration, may, with grief on the part of the pious and benevolent, and with malignant pleasure on the part of the profane, adjudge the greater proportion of those who have a general acceptance as religious persons, not to be truly such? Or is it, that persons sincerely intent on religion, actuated in some considerable degree by its spirit, but painfully conscious of a vast disparity to the pattern so splendidly exhibited, should therefore resign themselves to despondency? Or what else? What else?—unless, after looking up to this consummate pattern, the teacher, taking a descending track of thought, shall exert his best judgement to show, through several degrees cautiously followed downward, how the genuine principle may exist where there is much at variance with it; insisting at each grade, on the manner in which it is essential for that principle to act, in proof that it is really there notwithstanding the offensive things that keep their place with it; and solemnly protesting against the fatal propensity to find a ground of safety at the last lowest point at which it may be hoped that the principle may still be not absolutely incompatible with that with which it is inconsistent.

It appeared a serious defect in Mr. Hall's preaching, that he practically took on him too little of this responsibility. In temporary oblivion of the rule that theoretic description should keep existing fact so much in view that a right adjustment may be made between them, he would expatiate in eloquent latitude on the Christian character, bright and "full-orbed" in all its perfections, of contempt of the world, victory over temptation, elevated devotion, assimilation to the divine image, zeal for the divine glory, triumphant faith, expansive charity, sanctity of life; without an intimation, at the time or afterward, that all this, so sublime if it were realized, so obligatory as the attainment toward which a Christian should be, at whatever distance, aspiring, is yet unhappily to be subjected, on behalf of our poor nature, to a cautious discussion of modifications and degrees; especially when the anxious question comes to be, *What deficiencies prove a man to be no christian?*

Now a hearer, left to some coolness of thought, was tempted to say to himself, What do the people think of this?—if indeed they *do* think, if they be not beguiled away from reflection. How does it strike the many persons in this large assembly, who, respectable perhaps as men of the world, make no pretension to what is meant by personal religion; and how those others who despise or hate it, and would hardly endure to hear any thing about it but for the sake of the eloquence which they think might have been more worthily employed?* Are they, in imagination, carrying out this brilliant picture for test, or contrast, into the real world, where they have observed and descried, with no little vigilance, the culpable tempers habits, and proceedings, the inconsistencies, weaknesses, and errors, of many whom the preacher himself would be the last man to pronounce altogether destitute of piety? But if they do make this invidious use of the description, will they not with pernicious self-complacency assume, not exactly, perhaps, that the whole affair is altogether a fable, but, that unless there be super-emphatically "few that be saved," that if these sadly defective Christians may nevertheless be finally safe, there must, after all, be a standard so much more accommodating to human nature as it is, than that implied in the preacher's representation, as to allow a confidence that they are not even themselves in any formidable danger; since they only share the faults, they will say, and without making the high pretensions, of these professed Christians. Why *let* them go off with this mischievous assumption?

And how does it strike the persons here, who stand in the recognized accepted class of the religious? Have they, while hearing this elevated strain, any such thing as reflection on themselves? Is their conscience lulled by what might seem adapted in all reason to alarm it? Have they no secret monition—are the very serpents

* I recollect the instance of a gentleman expressing, at the conclusion of the public service, the highest admiration of the preacher, and adding, "What a pity Mr. Hall's great talents had not been destined to the Bar or the House of Commons, where he would have made so capital a figure?"

themselves that infest a corrupt and but imperfectly renovated nature, so charmed into stillness that there is no consciousness—of many things which this grand exemplar shines but to expose and condemn? What! is there no internal voice to accuse them, any of them, of such things as a proneness to an excessive love of the world, as coldness of devotion, reluctance of duty, insubordination to the divine will, lapses into a besetting sin, the indulgence of evil tempers, selfish competition with fellow-mortals, frequent forgetfulness of hereafter? If there be not; if their admiration of the beautiful image of Christian excellence in the abstract carry them away from all consciousness of what is unlike it in themselves, it is quite time to come down to a mode of address that shall turn their thoughts homeward, and bring them into a consideration of what they are virtually doing in admiring such a model; shall excite them to reflect, if they so admire one and another feature of it, what they should think of this and the other characteristic where the correspondence is to be sought in their own actual condition. It would be well to bring them to the questions of, What is the difference? and, Why such a difference? and, What would be the right feeling under the self-conviction of such a difference? Let them not be suffered to regard this bright model merely as the ideal representation of something so unattainable on earth, that they are absolved from any serious consideration whether, and how, they have formed a judgement of what *is* attainable and *must* be attained; what they are really wishing to attain; what they think they *have* attained; why it is no more; what are the conscious evils yet unsubdued; what they deem the proportion of those evils to be to the better part; how they measure that proportion, and ascertain the predominance of the good; and whether they be disposed to content themselves with that state of the case.

But if, on the contrary, this bright exhibition of the Christian character, instead of playing harmlessly over them like an aurora borealis, has sent its rays deeply into their soul, and is bringing more plainly to their own view

the evils lurking there, the sinful propensities, the spiritual disorders of whatever class, with the addition of the moral and practical ones resulting externally, in what manner are they adjusting that very serious contrast, so as to maintain a confidence that, nevertheless, on the whole the case is safe? No doubt it must be, by making very large allowances for the sad imperfection of our nature. But would it not be well for the Christian instructor to endeavour to take that somewhat hazardous process out of the hands of their self-love, by interfering himself in the adjudication of what may be conceded to a fallen nature, on such conditions as shall not essentially invalidate the demands of religion?

As the last observation I would take the liberty to make, I may note the same prevailing inadvertence to the realities of life in Mr. Hall's manner of representing the *happiness* conferred by religion; premising, as a thing somewhat of a piece with this particular, that he would sometimes indulge in language hardly consonant to either theory or experience in what it seemed to imply of the *facility* of entering, by a transition of spirit and action, on the Christian life. I will confess he did appear to me, in reference to this matter, to lose sight too much, when he surrendered himself to the animated current of his sentiments, of the desperate and obstinate alienation of the human soul from its Creator. It was not that he did not most fully believe this to be the condition of our nature, on the evidence of both Scripture and notorious fact; or that he did not hold, according to the strictest Calvinistic construction, the doctrine of a necessity of a special divine agency for men's conversion to a new spiritual state; but that, when his mind was kindled at the attraction and glories of religion, he would forget, for the time, both how lost are those attractions on a corrupt nature, and what a dreadful combination of influences there is to retain it in its aversion.

But, to revert to the specific topic, the representation of the *happiness* of the Christian character. He would describe, with a prolonged effusion of beautiful sentiment and language, the delightful confidence in the divine

favour, the harmony and communion of the pious spirit with its God and Saviour, the independence on sublunary things, the superiority to the cares and distractions of life, the serenity of trust in Providence under the greatest trials or most menacing presages, the cordial invariable acquiescence in the divine dispensations, the victory over the fear of death, the unclouded prospect into eternity. Now it needs not be said that such *would* be the felicities of a condition exalted to the absolute perfection of Christianity; or that the religious instructor should point to these elevations as the eminence toward which it is the tendency of religion to carry upward the human spirit, and toward which a Christian is to aspire, however remote his utmost ascent may be from reaching it. He may do well to cite from the memorials of good men, some of the examples most remarkably approaching to a practical evidence, that such is the felicity which it is in the nature of religion to impart. And he will have at once to reprove those who, regarding such a privileged existence as something like a visionary scene suspended in the sky, rather than a state partially attainable by mortals, are resting with a dull acquiescence in a poverty of religious enjoyment; and to console and animate those whose earnest aspirations are repressed by the consciousness how little they attain. But if, in describing the happiness of a Christian, he take it at its highest degree, to which the experience of the most devout men has risen only at some favoured seasons, (at least if they had much to do with the world's concerns,) and spread out the representation in imagery, all formed of the finest elements, omitting to advert in the most express manner as an indispensable part of his business, to the actual state of good men, so beset and overrun with things which deny them to be so happy, it would be inevitable for the supposed cool-minded hearer to have his thoughts once more looking off to matters of fact. He would say to himself, "It may be taken as certain, that many among the sincere Christians in this assembly are in circumstances which must make them listen to this unqualified representation with pain or with incredulity. Some of them

are harassed, without the possibility of escape, by the state of their worldly affairs; perhaps oppressed by disasters under which their fortitude shrinks, or seeing the approach of such as no prudence or effort can avail to prevent; anxiously awaiting a critical turn of events; vexed beyond the patience of Job by the untowardness, selfishness, or dishonesty encountered in their transactions. Some are enduring the cares and hardships of poverty; and thinking how much more easy is the eloquent inculcation, than the reduction to practice, of the precept to 'take no thought for the morrow.' Some are distressed by bad dispositions among their nearest kindred; perhaps by anticipations, grievous in proportion to their piety, of the conduct and ultimate destiny of their children. Some may have come here for an hour who are fixed in the sad situation of witnessing the slow but certain progress of persons, whose life is on all accounts most important to them, in a descent toward the grave. Some are experiencing, while strenuously maintaining, a severe conflict between the good and evil in their own minds. Some may be in mortifying recollection of lapses into which they have been betrayed. Some are of melancholic temperament; and while striving to keep hold of their faith and hope, are apt to see whatever concerns their welfare in an unfavourable view in every direction, and especially in looking forward to death. Some, of contemplative disposition, are often oppressed, even to a degree of danger to their piety, by the gloom which involves the economy of the world, where moral evil has been predominant through all the course of time. In short, it is probable that the much larger proportion of the religious persons now present are in no condition to allow a possibility of their yielding themselves in sympathy with the spirit of this celebration of the happiness of religion. Would it not, then, be a more useful manner of illustrating this subject, to carry it into a trial on the actual circumstances of the Christian life; to place it, with appropriate discriminations, by the side of the real situations of good men; to show that, notwithstanding all, religion *can* insure a *preponderance* of happiness;

to demonstrate *how* it can do so; to point out the most efficacious means, in each case respectively, and urge their diligent use; to suggest consolations for deficient success, with a note of admonition respecting such of its causes as require that reproof be mixed with encouragement? all the while keeping in view that condition of our existence on earth, which renders it inevitable that the happiness created even by religion, for the men most faithfully devoted to it, should not be otherwise than greatly incomplete?"

These observations have grown to a length beyond my intention or expectation; and I should have been better pleased if I could have felt assured, that a far less protracted criticism might suffice for an intelligible description of the nature and operation of certain things, in the character of Mr. Hall's ministration, which I had presumed to think not adapted, in the proportion of its eminent intellectual superiority, to practical effect.

It is not to be exacted of the greatest talents that they have an equal aptitude to two widely different modes of operation. Nor is any invidious comparison to be made between the respective merits of excelling in the one and in the other. But, indeed, it were impossible to make any comparative estimate that *should* be invidious to Mr. Hall, if the question were of intellect, considered *purely as a general element of strength*. To attain high excellence in the manner of preaching which I have indicated as what might be a more useful one than his, though it require a clear-sighted faculty disciplined in vigilant and various exercise, is within the competence of a mind of much more limited energy and reach than Mr. Hall's power and range of speculative thought. At the same time it is not to be denied, that such a mode of conducting the ministration, whatever were the talents employed, were they even of the highest order, would demand a much more laborious and complicated process than it cost our great preacher to produce his luminous expositions of christian doctrine, with those eloquent, but too general, practical applications into which the discussion changed

toward the close. Indeed, there is reason to believe that, besides the circumstances which I have noted as indisposing and partly unfitting him to adapt his preaching discriminatively to the states and characters of men as they are, another preventing cause was a repugnance to the kind and degree of labour required in such an operation. For some passages found in his writings appear to prove that his conception of the most effective manner of preaching was very considerably different from his general practice.* I repeat, his *general* practice;

* Several paragraphs might be cited from his sermon on the "Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister." I will transcribe two or three sentences.

"The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and "appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be consi- "dered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate va- "riety in the method of treatment. . . . . Without descending to such "a minute specification of circumstances as shall make our addresses "personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic; that the "conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher search- "ing it, and every individual know where to class himself. The "preacher who aims at doing good, will endeavour, above all things, to "insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it im- "possible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. . . . . It "is thus the Christian Minister should endeavour to prepare the tribu- "nal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on "himself."

To the same effect, there are several pages of advice to preachers, in the "Fragment on Village Preaching." The value of the whole section will be but partially apprehended from the following extracts.

"A notion prevails among some, that to preach the Gospel includes "nothing more than a recital or recapitulation of the peculiar doctrines "of Christianity. If these are firmly believed and zealously embraced, "they are ready to believe the work is done, and that all the virtues of "the christian character will follow by necessary consequence. Hence "they satisfy themselves with recommending holiness in general terms, "without entering into its particular duties; and this, in such a manner, "as rather to predict it as the result of certain opinions, than to enforce "it on the ground of moral obligation . . . . . The conscience is not "likely to be touched by general declamations on the evil of sin, and "the beauty of holiness, without delineation of character. . . . . He "must know little of human nature, who perceives not the callousness "of the human heart, and the perfect indifference with which it can "contemplate the most alarming truths when they are presented in a "general abstract form. It is not in this way that religious instruction "can be made permanently interesting. It is when particular vices are "displayed as they appear in real life, when the arts of self-deception "are detected, and the vain excuses by which a sinner palliates his "guilt, evades the conviction of conscience, and secures a delusive

for it would be wrong to dismiss these comments without observing that he did, sometimes, discuss and illustrate a topic in a special and continued application to circumstances in the plain reality of men's condition. And when he did so it was with striking and valuable effect. I shall, for instance, never forget the admiration with which I heard a sermon, chiefly addressed to the young, from the text, "For every thing there is a time." Nothing could exceed the accuracy of delineation, and the felicitous management of language, with which he marked the circumstances, conjunctures, and temptations of real life; the specific interests, duties, dangers, vices; the consequences in futurity of early wisdom or folly; and the inseparable relation of every temporal and moral interest to religion; with an inculcation of which, conceived in faithful appropriateness to the preceding topics, he closed in an effusion of what merited to be irresistible pathos.* Sermons of a tenour to class them with this, were heard at intervals, not so wide but that the number might be somewhat considerable within the space of two or three years. It should be observed, however, that their construction was still not wholly diverse from his general manner. The style of address was not marked by rises and falls; did not alternate between familiarity and magisterial dignity; was not modified by varying impulses into a strain which, as was said of Chatham's eloquence, was of every kind by turns. It was sustained, unintermitted, of unrelaxing gravity, in one order of language. and, after a short progress from the commencement, constantly rapid in delivery. But still those sermons were cast in the best imaginable compromise between, on the one hand, the theoretic speculation and

"tranquillity: in a word, it is when the heart is forced to see in itself "the original of what is described by the apostle; and, perceiving "that the secrets of his heart are made manifest, he falls down, and "confesses that God is among us of a truth. The reproof which awa- "kened David from his guilty slumber, and made him weep and trem- "ble, turned not on the general evil of sin, but on the peculiar circum- "stances of aggravation, attending that which he had committed."

* One of the reported sermons in the sixth volume of his Works, that on the "Love of God," is a remarkable example of specific illustration, pointedly applied.

high-pitched rhetoric to which he was addicted, and, on the other, that recognition of what men actually are in situation and character, to which his mind did not so easily descend. They were the sermons which the serious and intelligent hearers regretted that people of every class, in many times the number of the actual congregation, should not have the benefit of hearing; and which it is now their deep and unavailing regret that he could not be induced to render a lasting, I might say a perennial, source of utility to the public.

I cannot be aware whether the opinions, or feelings less definite than opinions, of readers who have had the advantage of hearing Mr. Hall, will coincide with the observations ventured in these latter pages. Those who have heard him but very occasionally, will be incompetent judges of their propriety. I remember that at a time very long since, when I had not heard more perhaps than three or four of his sermons, I did not apprehend the justness, or, indeed, very clearly the import, of a remark on that characteristic of his preaching which I have attempted to describe, when made to me by his warm friend, and most animated admirer, Dr. Ryland; who said that Mr. Hall's preaching had, with an excellence in some respects unrivalled, the fault of being *too general;* and he contrasted it with that of Mr. Hall's father, who had erred on the side of a too minute particularity.— But whether these strictures be admitted or questioned, I will confidently take credit with every candid reader, for having, as in the character of historian, and disclaiming the futile office of panegyrist, deliberately aimed at a faithful description of this memorable preacher, as he appeared during that latter period of his public ministrations, to which my opportunity of frequent attendance on them has unfortunately been confined.

I can hardly think it should be necessary to protest against such a misunderstanding of these latter pages as should take them to imply, that Mr. Hall's preaching was not eminently useful, notwithstanding those qualities of it which tended to prevent its being so in full proportion to the mighty force of mind which it displayed. Its be-

neficial effect is testified by the experience of a multitude of persons, of various orders of character. Intelligent, cultivated, and inquiring young persons, some of them favourably inclined to religion, but repelled by the uncouth phraseology, and the meanness and trite commonplace illustration, in which they had unfortunately seen it presented; some of them under temptations to scepticism and others to a rejection of some essential principle of christianity, were attracted and arrested by a lucid and convincing exhibition of divine truth. Men of literature and talents, and men of the world who were not utterly abandoned to impiety and profligacy, beheld religion set forth with a vigour and a lustre, and with an earnest sincerity infinitely foreign to all mere *professional* display, which once more showed religion worthy to command, and fitted to elevate the most powerful minds; which augmented the zeal of the faithful among those superior spirits, and sometimes constrained the others to say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian." Men of sectarian spirit were cheated of a portion of their bigotry, or forced into a consciousness that they ought to be ashamed of it. And, as a good of a more diffusive kind, numbers of people of the common order were held under a habitual impression of the importance of religion; and the enumeration would, I believe, be very considerable, if it could be made, of individuals indebted to his ministry for those effectual convictions which have resulted in their devotement to God, and their happiness in life and death.

It is very possible, that the latter part of these observations may be deemed erroneous or exaggerated by some persons, on a mere general presumption that, in such pre-eminent excellence, so universally acknowledged, there *could* not be any considerable defects. But at all events, and whatever the just exception may be to an unqualified eulogy, it is exactly by those whose discernment the least permitted them to be undiscriminating in their admiration, that the deepest regret is felt for the departure of that great and enlightened spirit. The crude admiration which can make no distinctions, never renders justice to what is really great. The colossal form is seen through a mist, dilated perhaps, but obscured and undefined, instead of standing forth conspicuous in its massive solidity and determinate lineaments and dimensions. The less confused apprehension of the object verifies its magnitude while perceiving its clear line of circumscription. The persons who could see where Mr. Hall's rare excellence had a limit short of the ideal perfection of a preacher, would, by the same judgement, form the justest and the highest estimate of the offerings which, in his person, reason and genius consecrated to religion—of the force of evidence with which he maintained its doctrines, of the solemn energy with which he urged its obligations, and of the sublimity with which he displayed its relations and prospects.

By those persons, the loss is reflected on with a sentiment peculiar to the event, never experienced before, nor to be expected in any future instance. The removal of any worthy minister, while in full possession and activity of his faculties, is a mournful occurrence; but there is the consideration that many such remain, and that perhaps an equal may follow where the esteemed instructor is withdrawn. But the feeling in the present instance is of a loss altogether irreparable. The cultivated portion of the hearers have a sense of privation partaking of desolateness. An animating influence that pervaded, and enlarged, and raised their minds, is extinct. While ready to give due honour to all valuable preachers, and knowing that the lights of religious instruction will still shine with useful lustre, and new ones continually rise, they involuntarily and pensively turn to look at the last fading colours in the distance where the greater luminary is set.

LETTER

TO

THE COMMITTEE OF

THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

To the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society, convened in London on the 15th instant.

Bristol, March 12, 1827.

GENTLEMEN,

It is with much diffidence that I presume to address you on the present occasion, nor am I certain whether I am perfectly in order in so doing; but conceiving this to be a crisis in the mission, and not being able to be present at the meeting, I could not satisfy myself without communicating the result of my reflections on the important business which has called you together.

Dr. Marshman, it seems, as the representative of the brethren at Serampore, has instituted a demand of one-sixth of all the money collected or subscribed towards the society, to be paid annually in aid of the missionary operations going on there. It must strike every one as strange, that this demand should almost immediately follow a preceding one which was acceded to, which he then professed to consider as perfectly satisfactory, and as putting a final termination to all dispute or discussion on the subject of pecuniary claims—that, notwithstanding this, he should now bring forward a fresh requisition of one-sixth of the same amount, accompanied, as I am informed, by an intimation, that it is possible this may not be his ultimatum. This proceeding has all the appearance of a tentative process, designed to ascertain how far our anxiety to avoid a breach will prompt us to submit to his encroachments. What security have we against future requisitions if we yield to the present? What reason to suppose our ready compliance in this instance will not encourage him to embrace an early opportunity of making further demands? It has all the appearance of the commencement of a series of unfounded pretensions and endless exactions.

That a set of men, in the character of missionaries, after disclaiming the authority of the society which sent them out, and asserting an entire independence—after claiming an absolute control (whether rightfully or not) over a large property which that society has always considered as its own, should demand an annual payment from those from whom they had severed themselves, and thus attempt to make their constituents their tributaries, is a proceeding scarcely paralleled in the history of human affairs.

I am utterly at a loss to understand on what principles the Serampore brethren, in the position in which they have placed themselves, have any claim whatever on the funds of the society whose authority they have renounced, after appropriating to themselves the management of an extensive revenue, in the disposal of which they will not brook the smallest interference or control. Without reverting to former grounds of controversy, it will surely be admitted that the independence we have, for the sake of peace, conceded to them, is reciprocal—that our right to it is not less than theirs, and that we are consequently at liberty to dispose of our income in the way which we conceive most conducive to the purposes of our institution.

It may be very proper, under certain circumstances, for us to aid the brethren at Serampore by occasional donations, regulated by the state of our funds and the attention necessary to other objects; but this is essen-

tially different from absolutely engaging to pay an annual sum, which would, in my humble opinion, be equally inconsistent with the interests and the honour of this society. As our brethren of Serampore have chiefly exerted themselves in translations, and are confessedly in possession of great pecuniary resources, there seems no imperious necessity for regularly diverting those funds to their aid, which are unequal to the demand which Bengal alone would create, were our mission (a most desirable event) concentrated within that province. Calcutta, to say nothing of other stations, cries aloud for more labourers, but cries in vain.

It has been said that we are indebted for our success to the celebrity attached to the names of Carey, Marshman, and Ward; and that but for the unbounded confidence of the religious public in these men, our funds would never have been realized. Supposing this to be the case, to take advantage of such a circumstance in order to bring the society into subjection, would not be to make a very generous use of their influence. But I believe it is a mistake; it is my firm conviction that the Baptist mission, like other kindred institutions, rests on the basis of its own merits, and that it will not fail to secure the confidence of the public, in proportion to the purity of its motives, the wisdom of its councils, and the utility of its objects. If it cannot sustain the ordeal of public opinion on these principles, let it sink, rather than owe its support to the illusion of a name.

To contemplate the possibility of being compelled to an open rupture with our brethren of Serampore is unquestionably painful; it is their knowledge alone of our extreme reluctance to hazard that consequence which emboldens them to advance these exorbitant claims. If we can avoid it by a consistent and dignified mode of procedure, let it be avoided; but if peace can only be purchased by an ignominious surrender of our rights as a society,—by a tame submission to unreasonable demands,—and by subjecting it to a sort of feudal dependence, in all time to come, on persons we know not whom, whose character we cannot ascertain, and whose

actions we cannot control,—the purchase is, in my humble opinion, too dear. The treatment of the Serampore brethren has not been such that we need shrink from its most ample exposure to the public; nor have we any other censure to fear on that head, except it be for lavishing upon them a too overweening confidence. We have no such secrets to conceal, that it should cost us a large annual payment to secure their suppression.

Of the three brethren with whom we were lately in treaty, one is already gone into eternity, and the remaining two are advancing to that period of life which ought to make us pause ere we enter into engagements, which will give to persons of whom we know little or nothing a permanent right of interference with our funds.

The crisis is most solemn; and a hasty compliance with the present requisition may, when it is too late, make matter for bitter and unavailing repentance.—That you may be indulged on this, and on every other occasion, with "the wisdom which is from above," is the sincere prayer of,

Gentlemen,
Your obedient humble servant,
ROBERT HALL.

NOTE.

SERAMPORE MISSIONARIES.

In this collection of Mr. Hall's Works, every thing is inserted that was published with his sanction, and that is known to have been written by him, with the exception of a single letter which he many years ago engaged to suppress. But on inserting the letter in reference to the Serampore Missionaries (Vol. IV. p. 415.),* I inadvertently omitted to mention, that it received a place in virtue of the general rule thus adopted, and without asking the concurrence of

* The references in this and the following article are to the 8vo. edition of Mr. Hall's Works.

Mr. Foster. I therefore think it right to insert a letter which Mr. Foster has addressed to me in consequence of that omission. The controversy between the London Committee and the Serampore Missionaries I have always deeply deplored; yet I have an entire persuasion that the Committee did every thing in *their* power to avoid it, and abstained from making it public until they were compelled to do so by a feeling of duty to the Society with the management of whose concerns they are entrusted.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

TO DR. GREGORY.

MY DEAR SIR,

I observe you have admitted into the fourth volume of Mr. Hall's Works, very possibly without having had time, amidst your various and important engagements, for a deliberate consideration, a letter written by Mr. Hall to the "Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society," in March, 1827, on the occasion of a request from the Serampore Missionaries, for a certain annual grant of money from that Society. As that letter is calculated to injure the character of those Missionaries in the estimation of the readers of Mr. Hall's Works in times to come, allow me to submit to you whether it be not a claim of justice that you should give a place, in the concluding volume, to an observation or two which I have to offer.

Some of the points alluded to with implied censure in that letter, (those respecting the constitutional terms or the relation which had subsisted between the Society and those Missionaries) will be matters of small account in the view of the future generation of readers. But the main purport and effect of that letter must be, in the apprehension of those readers, to fix a dishonourable imputation on personal character. It is charged upon the Serampore fraternity (as well collectively as in their representative, Dr. Marshman) that they were rapacious of money; that they were apparently practising to see how much of it they could extort, on the strength of their reputation, as presumed by them to be of essential importance to that of the Society; that they were already exceeding the utmost pardonable advance of encroachment; that they were likely to be progressive and insatiable in their exactions; and that their possession, at the very same time, of "an extensive revenue," "large pecuniary resources," rendering needless to them the assistance applied for, stamped a peculiar character of arrogance on that attempt at exaction.

Suppose a reader at some distant time to form his judgement exclusively on this representation, as an authentic and sufficient evidence; and what can he think of those men, but that they must have been, to say no more, some of the most unreasonable of mankind?—that though they did perform things which remain memorable in religious history, they were not worthy of their high vocation, for that the merit of their performances was spoiled by a grasping selfishness and an exorbitant arrogance? This supposition, that the document in question may have on the judgement of readers an effect inimical to the memory of those original Missionaries, long after they are dead, is authorized by the probability that Mr. Hall's writings will retain a place in public attention and favour, long after the occasional productions of the present time, in explanation and defence of the conduct of those Missionaries, shall have gone out of knowledge.

Now, my dear Sir, let me appeal to your sense of justice whether it be right, that this unqualified invective, written for a temporary purpose, without probably the least thought of publication, and written, as I shall prove to you, under extreme error, should be perpetuated in a standard work, as a stigma on the character of those men, without the admission also into the same work, for equal permanence, of a brief notice adapted to correct the wrong. The wrong is no less than this—that the charge, such as I have described it in plain conformity to the document, is made on men who, having prosecuted a course of indefatigable exertions in the Christian cause, one of them for more than a quarter of a century, and another a much longer time, during more than twenty years of which they have not received or asked any share of the Society's income—having supported themselves, and performed their great literary, and their other missionary operations gratuitously—having, besides this, expended in the Christian service, during a long period, several thousand pounds a-year from resources created by their own diligence—and having also contributed very largely by their high reputation to the public credit and success of the Society itself—could not, after all this, conceive it to be an unreasonable "exaction," or "extortion," to request the aid of a sixth part of the Society's annual income, when at last their own had become greatly diminished, chiefly in consequence of

the establishment of other printing offices and schools in the neighbouring city.

But the case being so, it may be asked, with some surprise, how Mr. Hall could be betrayed to write such a letter. I can assign what must have been the chief cause. He believed he had reason to place implicit confidence in testimony, which assured him, that the Serampore Missionaries were at that very time in the possession of superabundant wealth; and he happened not to be in communication with informants, who could have proved to him that the contrary was the fact, to the painful extreme. It is from my own immediate knowledge that I make this statement. In a long conversation, just about the time that the letter to the Committee was written, he affirmed to me and several other friends, on the authority of testimony which he assigned, and held to be unquestionable, that these Missionaries had the command of what might truly be called (speaking in relative proportion to such a concern) an *immense* capital and income. I could give you the sums in figures, but forbear, purely in consideration of their extravagance. Suffice it to say, that the amount was most palpably and enormously beyond any alleged or conceivable necessities of such an establishment. Entirely confident in this belief, he thought, of course, that an application to the Society for aid was a most unreasonable claim; whereas, the fact was, as Dr. Marshman represented, and as Dr. Carey soon after confirmed, that it was made from the pressure of pecuniary difficulty, which was forcing the brethren at Serampore to the alternative of either obtaining assistance in this country, or abandoning several of their missionary stations. Had Mr. Hall been aware of the real state of the case, he would not have written a single sentence of that letter. It was unfortunate that he should have been so credulous to delusive representations.

Again appealing to your justice for the insertion of this note of explanation somewhere in the concluding volume,

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours, with the greatest regard,

J. FOSTER.

LETTERS.

LETTERS.

I.

TO THE BAPTIST CHURCH, BROADMEAD, BRISTOL.

Old Aberdeen, King's College,
*Dec. 4, 1783.**

Dear and honoured Brethren,

I DULY received your affectionate letter, in which you expressed your desire of engaging my labours as an assistant minister. Your request does me honour, and confers upon me an obligation which no efforts of mine can fully discharge. Yet, young and inexperienced as I am, I tremble to think of engaging in so arduous a work, especially in a situation where all my incapacity will be doubly felt. I cannot but think a few years would be necessary to enable me to gratify the lowest expectations. To plunge into the midst of life at so tender an age, with so little experience and so small a stock of knowledge, almost terrifies me. Your candid judgement of my past services I acknowledge with a mixture of pleasure and surprise,—pleased to attain the approbation of the wise and good, and surprised I in any measure have attained it; which I can attribute to nothing but the tenderness and forbearance which have ever strongly marked your conduct.

A retired and private sphere would indeed be more upon a level with my abilities, and congenial to my temper; yet I would willingly sacrifice my private inclinations to more important views, and lose sight of myself, if I could benefit others. My reluctance, therefore, to obey your call, arises merely from a feeling

* Mr. Hall was at this time in his twentieth year.

of my weakness, and my secret fear lest you should hereafter have occasion to repent it. If you could have dispensed with my labours till the final close of my studies, I might then have hoped to have been more able to serve you; but if not, I submit. Let me but crave your prayers, that as my day, so my strength may be. Your welfare, honoured brethren, will ever lie near my heart: numberless reflections concur with a thousand tender recollections of past kindness to keep it there. But these are not my only inducements to embrace your proposals. It is an additional pleasure to me, when I reflect with whom I have the honour to be connected,—with one whom I most sincerely reverence, and to whom I am bound by every tie of affection and gratitude.* I hope I undertake this work in the fear of God, and look forward to that awful day when all these solemn transactions shall be reviewed, and every secret motive that entered into them will be brought to light. Wishing you, dear brethren, all prosperity, and that you may be "stedfast in that day,"

I subscribe myself yours, &c.

ROBERT HALL, Jun.

II.

TO THE REV. ISAIAH BIRT, PLYMOUTH.

Cambridge, Feb. 5, 1791.

Dear Sir,

I have frequently thought it is something remarkable, that you and I have had an intimate acquaintance for many years, and yet that we have scarcely exchanged a letter. Our frequent occasional interviews have formerly rendered this less necessary; but now that I shall probably be settled in a distant situation, and an opportunity of seeing each other may seldom occur, I cannot satisfy myself without requesting a stated correspondence. You will excuse my earnestness to solicit this, when you recollect that it is the effect of that fixed and well-founded

* Dr. Caleb Evans.

esteem I always did and always shall bear you. I will communicate to you, not the incidents of the day or the week, for my time at present slides away without incident, but the inward sentiments of my heart, and the trifles, serious or gay, that spring up there; happy if I can imagine for a moment I am conversing with you as we did in the days of yore, when, without care or sorrow, we sauntered in the fields near Bristol. Ah, happy days, never to return again! I am at present at Cambridge, in the element of peace at least, if not of happiness; and indeed, after the tumults of strife and din of parties, quiet itself seems happiness.

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Perhaps you may wish to be informed of some particulars relating to my present situation. It is, on the whole, happy. The people seem very harmonious, and much united to me. I could wish their sentiments were more orthodox, though the far greater part of them are sufficiently so. They who are not, seem very ready to hear cool, dispassionate reasoning, on the other side of the question. I have tried their pulse several times since I have been here. On the first sabbath of my arrival, I preached in the morning on Heb. ix. 13.—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God," &c.—an entirely controversial sermon in defence of the atonement. I had the satisfaction of finding few, very few, who did not acknowledge the justice of my reflections, and that they who were not convinced were not displeased. I should be happy if Providence should make me an humble instrument of withstanding the dangerous errors that are in vogue, and of preventing or lessening their growth at least, in the place where Providence may appoint my lot. I intend very soon to preach a sermon professedly on the divinity of Jesus Christ This and the atonement, I am more and more convinced, lie at the foundation of the true system of vital religion; nor will sinners ever be converted to God by a ministry that excludes them. I hope I am not censorious; but I am persuaded that much of the liberality so much talked of

is rather a fashionable cant than any genuine candour of heart. At present I am a boarder; and shall continue so, in case I should stay here, for some time. I have free access to all the libraries gratis, by means of acquaintance in the University.

Pray write soon, very soon.

I am yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

III.

ACCEPTING THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT CAMBRIDGE.

To the Church lately under the pastoral care of Mr. Robinson:

Dear Brethren,

I am truly sensible of the honour you have done me, in inviting me to the pastoral office amongst you. I am convinced of my inability adequately to discharge its arduous duties; but, relying on your candour, and the hopes of superior assistance, I will attempt it to the best of my power, and beg an interest in your prayers, that my endeavours for your spiritual improvement may be succeeded, and that I may be able to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

Cambridge, July 23, 1791.

IV.

TO MISS WILKINS,

AFTERWARDS MRS. FYSH, OF CAMBERWELL.

Dear Madam,

I hope you will excuse the liberty that friendship dictates, of sending you these lines. The interest you possess in the affections of your friends, and their solicitude for your happiness, render it impossible they should hear of your affliction, without deeply sympathizing with you. Among these I beg leave to have the honour of classing myself; and though least, not last. I was the other day at Mr. W——'s, and was informed you still continued extremely indisposed. I immediately determined to take the liberty of writing, to express my esteem and sympathy. I upbraid myself heavily, for not having snatched an opportunity of seeing you before I left Bristol; and had I foreseen the prolongation of your illness, I certainly would not have omitted it. From me, who have suffered so much, it would be unpardonable, if distress of every kind did not extort a tear; much more, when the sufferer is a friend, whose virtues and talents I respect and admire. This world is, indeed, a scene of suffering; and it ought, in some measure, to reconcile us to our lot, that, in feeling distress, we strike chords in unison with the whole universe. Adversity is capricious in its times and seasons; but its visitations, sooner or later, never fail. In some, it overwhelms the first hopes of life, so that they no sooner begin to taste felicity in prospect, than they are crossed with hopeless disappointment: others it permits to advance farther, waits till they spread the foundations of happiness deep and wide, that, just when they have nearly finished the superstructure, it may overwhelm them with a more extensive desolation. Some are racked with pains and agonies of body; and others are preys to disappointed passions and blasted hopes, wasted with devouring regrets, and sick at heart with melancholy retrospects; wishing in vain they could arrest the wings of time, and put the current of life back. Of all these classes, every individual thinks *his* misfortunes the greatest. For the same reason, we are never at a loss to hear our own voice, be it ever so slender: the cry of a pierced heart sounds shrill in the solitary ear of the sufferer. Since we cannot essentially meliorate, let us endeavour to allay, our anguish by moderating our expectations. I am persuaded, all we can reasonably hope for, on this side the grave, is tranquillity; not the insensibility of a statue, but the placidity of a well-in-

formed mind, relying on the promises and the cheering prospects of immortality. But why do I thus address one who is as well acquainted with every subject of Christian consolation as I can pretend to [be]? I am persuaded you will edify your friends as much by your patience in affliction, as you have enlivened them in better days by the exercise of your sprightlier powers. Virtue is always consistent; and, guided by its dictates, you will never fail to be an example. This scene of suffering will not always last; nor do we suffer "as those without hope." It is, indeed, the night of nature, a short night, and not utterly dark: it will soon pass away, and be succeeded by a bright and endless day. Æneas comforts his companions in the midst of distress, by telling them that the retrospect of their sufferings will hereafter be delightful to them. Whether we shall, in this world, be indulged with such a satisfaction, I know not; but surely it will be a source of the most pleasing reflection in a happier world.

Of Bishop Leighton, whose sermons I wish you to read, Bishop Burnet declares, that during a strict intimacy of many years, he never saw him, for one moment, in any other temper than that in which he should wish to live and die: and if any human composition could form such a character, it must be his own. Full of the richest imagery, and breathing a spirit of the most sublime and unaffected devotion, the reading him is a truce to all human cares and human passions; and I can compare it to nothing but the beautiful representation in the twenty-third Psalm—it is like "lying down in green pastures, and by the side of still waters."

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Cambridge 1791.

V.

TO MRS. FYSH, OF CAMBERWELL,

ON THE DEATH OF HER SISTER MRS. PARSONS.

Cambridge, August 14, 1796.

My dear Friend,

Permit me to express the deep interest I take in your distress, from the loss of the best of friends, and the best of sisters, in the loss of dear Mrs. Parsons. How many losses are united! She has left a husband to lament the most lovely of wives; you, the most endeared of sisters; the church of Christ, one of its brightest ornaments; and the world, one of its fairest examples: all, all have fallen a victim in this most excellent woman. I have not met with any event, for many years, that has affected me at all equally. Had I been permitted to draw aside the mysterious veil that hides futurity; could I have had any presentiments I saw her at —— for the last time, how solemn would have been the moments, how awfully interesting my emotions! I pity her husband—I pity her sisters; this is a stroke which must be severely felt in the tenderest manner. I know the heart, when recently wounded, must be indulged in the luxury of grief; and, if there ever was an occasion which could justify the most poignant regret, it is the present, in which we lament the loss of so much excellence. But I hope you will, by degrees, inure your imagination to dwell less on your loss, and more on her happiness. What a glorious display of the power of christianity! what a triumphant departure! O, that I may die the death of Mrs. Parsons, and that my last end may be like hers! Her life was an ornament to christianity—a pattern to her sex. Immortality dawned on her enraptured mind, even before it quitted its earthly abode; and her pure and elevated soul made an easy transit to the society of the blessed. Her career was short, but illustrious; and she crowded into her little sphere the virtues of a long life. Short as her continuance was upon earth, she was permitted to exemplify the duties of every character, and to imprint, in indelible [traces], on the memories of all who were

honoured with her acquaintance, the perfections of a friend, a sister, a mother, and a wife. It is true she has slept the sleep of death; but she sleeps in Jesus: she has gone before you into the holy of holies: she will meet you at the great rendezvous of being, the assembly of the just; and, in the mean time, instead of being an object of *your* pity, probably looks down upon *you* with ineffable tenderness and compassion. I have seen, besides your letter, one from Mrs. Gutteridge; and I must say, I never heard, on the whole, of so calm, so triumphant a death: it seemed as if she had been permitted to step into heaven before her final departure, that she might thence address herself to her friends with more serenity, dignity, and effect.

What, my dear friend, besides Christianity, can thus scatter the horrors of the soul? What else could enable a young lady in the bloom of life, with a prosperous fortune, beloved by a husband, endeared to her friends, and esteemed by the whole world, to triumph in the thoughts of dissolution? Divine christianity! it is thine only to comfort and support the languishing and dying.

I hope all Mrs. Parsons' numerous acquaintance will be properly impressed with this singular dispensation of Providence. Let them ask themselves whether the loose sceptical principles of the age are at all adapted to such a scene; whether they have any thing in them that will enable them to exert the calm heroism displayed in the most trying moment by this departed excellence. Let me hope some one, at least, will be impressed by this wonderful example of the power of religion.

Death has made frequent visits to your family; the youngest is now snatched away. Mr. Beddome, poor Richard Beddome, and now Mrs. Parsons; in how short a time they have followed each other!

I find, your dear deceased sister expressed her anxiety at the progress of deism with her last breath. To a serious mind it affords a most melancholy prospect; but, you must observe, it does not seize the mind at once: it advances by the progressive stages of socinianism and dissipation. Men first lose their relish for what is *vital* and distinguishing in christianity, before they dispute its evidences, or renounce its authority. Lax notions of the person of Christ, a forgetfulness of his mediation, place the mind in a deistical state, and prepare it for the most licentious opinions.

The consolations of your dear deceased sister did not result from a general belief of the doctrine of immortality, in which the socinians place the whole of revelation; but in specific views of Christ as a Saviour, and the prospect of being for ever with him. My dear friend, let us hold fast *this kind of christianity*, without wavering, as the antidote of death.

Excuse this freedom, which results not, from any suspicion of your own defection, but from a friendly concern for some for whom we both retain the sincerest regards. My paper forbids me to add more.

Present my most affectionate respects to Mr. Fysh, and accept the same yourself, from

Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

VI.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS, HAVERFORDWEST.

Cambridge, June 7, 1799.

My Dear Friend,

How could you suspect for a moment that I wished to dissolve my friendship with you, a friendship which I have always esteemed a distinguished honour and happiness? No, my dear friend. My long silence is indeed inexcusable; but impute it to any cause, and you will do me more justice than by suspecting my diminution of regard. My aversion to letter-writing you are well acquainted with. I have formed many resolutions to surmount it: but, in the moment of trial, am baffled. I sincerely sympathize with you in the loss of your child; but, my dear friend, do not suffer your spirits to sink. Remember the tenure on which all human enjoyments are held, the wisdom and sovereignty of their great

Author, and the gracious promise afforded to true christians, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him." Remember the many blessings with which a kind Providence still indulges you. Ought you not to rejoice that your affectionate companion in life is spared; and that, though your child is snatched from your embraces, he has escaped from a world of sin and sorrow? The stamp of immortality is placed on his happiness, and he is encircled by the arms of a compassionate Redeemer. Had he been permitted to live, and you had witnessed the loss of his virtue, you might have been [reserved] to suffer still severer pangs. A most excellent couple in our congregation are now melancholy spectators of a son dying, at nineteen years of age, by inches, a victim to his vices. They have frequently regretted he did not die several years since, when his life was nearly despaired of, in a severe fever. "Who knoweth what is good for a man all the days of this his vain life, which he spends as a shadow?"

Many interesting scenes have occurred since our interview. About six months ago, I was attacked by a violent fever; and, in my own apprehensions, for about two days was on the borders of eternity. I never before felt my mind so calm and happy. Filled with the most overwhelming sense of my own unworthiness, my mind was supported merely by a faith in Christ crucified. I would not for the world have parted with that text, "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." I never before saw such a beauty and grandeur in the way of salvation by the death of Christ, as on that occasion. I am fully persuaded the evangelical doctrines alone are able to support the mind in the near views of death and judgement. May you and I be more and more grounded in a conviction of their truth, and acquainted with their power! It is to these doctrines the revelation of Christ is chiefly indebted for its efficacy in the hearts and lives of men.

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VII.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Cambridge, Feb. 14, 1801.

My dear Friend,

I have long purposed to write to you, and should have done so, but from that unhappy reluctance to writing which is almost a part of my nature. I hope you will do me the justice to believe it did not arise from any abatement of love and esteem. But a truce to apologies.

I am heartily glad to find you have preached at Clapham, where I hope you will find much to comfort you in the opportunity of doing good; for we can be truly happy but in proportion as we are the instruments of promoting the happiness of others. From what little I have heard of the people, you will meet kind and respectful treatment; but there will be much to damp your zeal, against which, I doubt not, you will be upon your guard. You will have pleasing society; and the vicinity to London has many advantages. May we, my dear friend, "work while it is to-day, for the hour is shortly coming when we can work no longer."

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Mr. Hill, by whom you sent your letter, just called in the morning, but could not make any stay. He seemed an agreeable, sensible man. If you should see Mr. Rowland Hill, present my christian respects to him, though unknown, and assure him it would give me uncommon pleasure to see and hear him at Cambridge, and that I shall think myself much honoured by hearing him preach in my pulpit. I went into the vestry and spoke to him, about two years ago, in Surrey Chapel; but he did not recollect me, and I felt a reluctanee to make so free as to mention my name, and therefore only mentioned you as a common friend and retired. He is a man for whom I ever entertained a very high esteem. Whatever a misjudging world may say, such men as these will "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever." May my soul, though at a humble distance, be admitted among them! I have just been reading with very great pleasure, and I hope some profit, Orton and

Stonhouse's Letters to Stedman. They contain most excellent prudential, moral and religious instruction; devout, liberal, rational, yet fervent piety, of the stamp of Doddridge, who is now my prime favourite among divines. If you have not seen them, they will richly repay your perusal. Dr. Stonhouse and Miss More both lived at Bristol at the time I resided there; and yet such was my extreme folly, I never took any means of becoming acquainted with either of them, which might very easily have been done. "Surely I have been more brutish than any man." What opportunities of knowledge and improvement have I lost, and have now reached the meridian of life, and am but a child! I may adopt, with more propriety than any man that ever lived, the prayer —"Remember not the sins of my youth."

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What strange news is this of Mr. Pitt's leaving the ministry? I am glad of it, though I suppose the men that succeed will persist in the same measures. But a schism in the cabinet bodes ill for the permanence of the party; so that I hope the present change is only a prelude to one more important. The present ministry can surely never be permanent. We must have peace, or we are inevitably and speedily ruined. But I hate politics, and have not read a paper above twice these nine months; so that you must not suppose I am very profound on these subjects.

You have heard, no doubt, of the death of poor Mr. ——, of ——. He departed this life, Monday se'nnight, at ——. He was at dinner at Mr. ——'s, and was taken with a second apoplectic fit betwixt the two courses, and expired in about two hours. He never spake, except the moment after he was seized; when, in answer to Mrs. ——'s inquiry, he said he was poorly. Poor man! he had very little happiness in life, and his last years were very *un*happy. No spirits, no exertion, no usefulness! I sometimes think it is a mercy I was not a "gentleman parson;" for, with my natural indolence, the temptations of that character would have completed my ruin. "Let us work, my dear friend, while it is called to-day."

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Pray, have you heard any more about the design of the government to suppress village preaching and Sunday-schools? Our friends at Clapham were very apprehensive of it some time since, but we hear little of it in the country. Mr. Simeon informed me lately, he had little doubt something of the sort would be attempted. He gave some intimation of the same kind in a sermon he preached to his own people. Pray inform me of all you have heard about it, for it is an affair which lies with considerable weight on my mind. If there should be any thing done, we shall see dismal times. Do you know whether any thing has been written on the subject? Mr. Simeon and I are upon very friendly terms. I lately dined with him at his own rooms, and have repeatedly met him in company, in which the conversation has been very agreeable. The reconciliation was effected principally by the intervention of Mr. Owen, of Fulham, and of Alderman Ind. A paper was drawn up, and signed by each party. We are upon very comfortable terms with the church-people at present; never was less party spirit at Cambridge. I wish I could see more good done; but yet I must not complain. Our congregation is very flourishing, and things wear an agreeable aspect. But my paper admonishes me to close. Pray write to me very soon, if not immediately, and let us see you at Cambridge as early as possible. Remember me respectfully to Mr. Thompson, Miss Wilkinson, Mr. Beddome, &c.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours constantly,

ROBERT HALL.

VIII.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Cambridge, May 26, 1801.

My dear Friend,

I thank you for your very kind letter, and for your invitation to pay you an early visit at Clapham. You

know, and every one who knows me knows, there is no friend living whom I should be so glad to see as yourself, but am afraid it will not be in my power to gratify this inclination at present. I am just going to see my old friend Kinghorn, at Norwich, where I shall be absent one, possibly two, sabbaths. In the fall of the year I am engaged to visit Bristol, and to go as far as Plymouth; so that I am afraid it will not be in my power to pay my London and Clapham friends a visit this summer. I shall fully expect, however, to see you at Cambridge some time in the summer. It is long since you were here; and we are anxiously desirous of seeing you, with Mrs. Phillips, to whom I beg to be affectionately remembered. It gives me extreme pleasure to hear of your great acceptance at Clapham. Miss Wilkinson * spoke in raptures of you to Mrs. Gutteridge. The distinguished respect the people have shown you, does them much more honour than it can do you. You are intimate, I find, with Mr. Beddome's family. They are, indeed, a lovely family, truly friendly, liberal, and intelligent: there is no house where I spend my time more agreeably, in London or the environs. The parcel you sent me consists of a very polite letter from Mr. Roberts, enclosing a copy of verses, elegant, and truly and strictly poetical, that is replete with *fiction*, containing praises which my heart compels me to disclaim with a sigh! O my friend, what an infinity of time I have lost, and how ardently do I long to do something which shall convince the world I have not lived in vain! My wishes, in this respect, will, it is to be feared, never be fulfilled. Tranquillity is not my lot. The prey, in early life, of passion and calamity, I am now perfectly devoured with an impatience to redeem time, and to be of some lasting benefit to the world, at least to the church. But this *inter nos*.

* This excellent lady, for more than half a century, devoted a portion of her income to the publication, in a *cheap* form, of judicious and valuable selections from the works of *Baxter, Howe, Allein, Janeway, Watts*, &c. she was also Editor of the "Pocket Prayer Book," the "Sunday School Library," "Pocket Sermons," and other useful books; of which many thousand copies were sold, and as many distributed gratuitously. They still obtain, as they deserve, a wide circulation.—Ed.

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You wish me to answer Bishop Horsley. You have seen, probably, Rowland Hill's sermon. I should be little disposed to *answer* Horsley, or any individual. Were any thing to be done, it should, in my opinion, enter into the whole matter, containing an ample defence of the liberty of worship, and of the specific efforts of methodists and dissenters, in instructing and evangelizing mankind.* I, some time since, put down some thoughts on this subject; but whether I shall proceed will depend on the conduct of the government; as a laboured defence would be, probably, impolitic, without a projected attack. Pray come soon to see us. My respects to Mr. Thompson, Miss Wilkinson, Beddomes, Petries, and other friends, as if named.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours constantly and affectionately,
Robert Hall.

IX.

TO MRS. TUCKER, PLYMOUTH DOCK.

Cambridge, Feb. 18, 1802.

Dear Madam,

I know not what apology to make, for having so long neglected to fulfil my part of the mutual promise of correspondence. Impute it to any thing rather than indifference; for I can assure you, with the utmost sincerity, that your kindness to me, while I had the happiness of being under your roof, left an impression on my mind of gratitude and esteem which no time can efface. It is doing no sort of justice to my feelings, to say that it exceeded any thing of the kind I ever experienced in my life; and heightens the regret I feel at the probability of few opportunities of personal intercourse with a friend, who has so great a claim to my regard, and in whose welfare I shall always feel myself so deeply interested. When I look back on my past

* See the Fragments on Toleration, &c. in Vol. III.—Ed.

days, (alas! why should I ever look back,) the few I spent at Plymouth Dock appear like a bright spot in a dreary prospect. Though my friends at Bristol were disposed to be displeased at my staying so long in Devonshire, I shall never repent of it since it afforded me an opportunity of renewing and cementing a virtuous friendship—the only kind of friendship that will flourish to eternal ages. Yes, Madam, I hope to renew with you the remembrance of my visit to Dock, and of your kindness, before the throne, where distance will no more interrupt the intercourse of kindred minds. What a happiness to reflect, though separated here, we are advancing every step nearer to the place of meeting; and in the mean time, we are mingling our addresses at the same mercy-seat, imbibing pleasure at the same spring, and depositing our anxieties in the same compassionate bosom! There is a divine reality in the communion of saints, which I pray we may more and more experience.

I have just been reading Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley: it has given me a much more enlarged idea of the virtues and labours of that extraordinary man than I ever had before. I would not incur the guilt of that virulent abuse which Toplady cast upon him, for points merely speculative and of very little importance, for ten thousand worlds. When will the Christian world cease disputing about religion, and begin to enter into its spirit, and practise its precepts? I am attempting to write a vindication of village preaching and of Sunday schools, but when it will be out I do not know; I endeavour to do a little at it every day, but am a slow hand.

From several quarters I am given to understand my preaching at Plymouth and Dock gave general dissatisfaction. This intelligence gives me no particular concern, being conscious of my upright intentions; but if it arose, in any degree, from the practical complexion of my addresses, I am sorry, as it indicates a tincture of that antinomian spirit which threatens to deluge the church.

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I am, dear Madam,
Your affectionate friend,
ROBERT HALL.

X

TO MRS. TUCKER.

Shelford, Feb. 14, 1804.

Dear Madam,

In truth I had almost despaired of the honour of ever hearing from you any more; it was therefore no small gratification to me, to be indulged once more with a sight of your hand-writing. I sincerely sympathize with you, my amiable friend, in the heavy loss you have sustained, in being deprived of so excellent a father, who must have been endeared to you in no ordinary degree, not only by the ties of nature, but by the peculiar tenderness and affection he ever displayed through an intimate and almost uninterrupted intercourse of a long series of years. I know, by experience, the pang which the loss of an affectionate parent produces, though under circumstances which possibly might render the blow somewhat less severe than that which you sustain. For many years previous to the death of my most excellent father, my situation had permitted me but little opportunity of intercourse, which though it did not in the least impair my esteem or reverence, probably diminished that tenderness and vehemence of attachment, which virtuous children never fail to feel towards the deserving parents with whom they reside. Allowing, however, for this difference, I well know the desolating, the withering sensation, which pervades the heart on the loss of an affectionate father. We feel, with a conviction as instantaneous as lightning, that the loss is irreparable,—that the void can never be supplied, and that, however many amiable and excellent friends we may have left, there is none who *will so naturally care for our souls.* I can most easily conceive, therefore, and most tenderly sympathize with the sorrow which so great a blow must inflict on so tender a heart. The aids of reason and religion may inspire resignation; but nothing but the torrent of time will wear away the traces of sorrow, and leave in the heart a tender and not an afflicting remembrance. It is needless, to a mind so vigorous as yours,

to recall to your remembrance the many sources of gratitude which remain in the midst of your affliction, and the great alleviations which accompany it. You will reflect, I am persuaded, with gratitude, on the great number of years your dear father was spared to you; you will remember the moral impossibility of his continuing to enjoy, at so advanced [an age], many additional years of happiness on earth; and, what will afford you the truest consolation, you will follow him within the veil, and contemplate him resting from his labours, and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. How infinitely indebted, my amiable friend, are we to that gospel which gives us everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace! May he who alone has immediate access to the heart, calm every agitation, and solace every disquietude of your breast! My excellent friend will not, I am persuaded, abandon herself to immoderate sorrow. I trust, at least, you will be extremely upon your guard against indulging that luxury of grief, as it has been termed, which, however congenial to the extreme sensibility of your temper, would disqualify you alike for happiness and duty. Your domestic station will, happily for you, afford that occupation and diversion to your thoughts, which will have a powerful tendency to moderate the excesses of grief.

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I am, dear Madam,
Yours most sincerely and respectfully,
ROBERT HALL.

TO MR. HEWITT FYSH, CAMBERWELL,

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. FYSH.

Shelford, March 11, 1804.

My dear Friend,

I deeply sympathize with you in the great loss you have sustained by the decease of your most excellent

wife. It is a stroke which will be long felt by all her surviving friends · how much more by a person with whom she was so long and so happily united! There are many considerations, however, which must occur to your mind, in alleviation of your distress. The dear deceased had long been rendered incapable, by the severity of her affliction, of enjoying life; and a further extension of it would have been but a prolongation of woe. Much as her friends must regret her loss, to have been eagerly solicitous for her continuance here would have been a refined selfishness, rather than true friendship. She was spared for the kindest purposes; to exemplify the power of religion in producing a cheerful resignation to the will of God, through a long series of suffering, to a degree which I never saw equalled in any other instance. *There was the faith and patience of the saints.* Her graces were most severely tried, and surely never did any shine brighter. The most active and zealous services in religion could not have yielded more glory to God than the dignified composure, the unruffled tranquillity, and the unaltered sweetness, she maintained amidst her trials. O, my dear friend, let the image of her virtues be ever impressed on your heart, and ever improved as an incentive to that close walk with God which laid the foundation of all her excellence. To have had an opportunity of contemplating the influence of genuine religion so intimately, and under so interesting a form, is a privilege which falls to the lot of few, and is surely one of the most inestimable advantages we can possess. That she was spared to you so long; that her patience continued unexhausted amidst so severe a pressure; and, above all, that you have so well-grounded an assurance of her happiness, must fill you with a grateful sense of the divine goodness. This state is designed to be a mingled scene, in which joy and sorrow, serenity and storms, take their turns. A perpetuity of either would be unsuitable to us. An uninterrupted series of prosperity would fill us with worldly passions. An unbroken continuity of adversity would unfit us for exertion. *The spirit would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made.* Pain and pleasure, scenes of satisfaction and

sorrow, are admirably attempered with each other, so as to give us constant room for thankfulness, and yet to remind us that *this is not our rest.* Our dear and invaluable friend has entered into the world of perfect spirits, to which she made so near an approach during her continuance here. To a mind so refined, and exercised in the school of affliction, so resigned to the divine will, and so replete with devotion and benevolence, how easy and delightful was the transition! To her *to live was Christ, and to die was gain.* Let us improve this dispensation of Providence, by imitating her example; let us cherish her memory with reverential tenderness; and consider it as an additional call to all we have received before, to *seek the things that are above.* I confess the thought of so dear a friend having left this world makes an abatement of its value in my estimation, as I doubt not it will still more in yours. The thought of my journey to London gives me little or no pleasure: for I shall hear the accents of that voice which so naturally expressed the animation of benevolence—I shall behold that countenance which displayed so many amiable sentiments—no more. But can we wish her back? Can we wish to recall her from that blissful society which she has joined, and where she is singing a new song? No, my dear friend! you will not be so selfish. You will, I trust, aspire with greater ardour than ever after the heavenly world, and be daily imploring fresh supplies of that grace which will fit you for an everlasting union with our deceased friend. I hope her amiable nieces will profit by this expressive event. And as they have (blessed be God for it!) *begun to seek after Sion with their faces thitherward*, that they will walk forward with additional firmness and alacrity. I shall make little or no stay in London on my first journey; but, as I long to see you, will spend the 11th instant (that is, the evening preceding my engagement to preach,) at your house, if agreeable. I shall be glad to see Mr. Dore, but pray do not ask strangers.

I am
Your sympathizing friend,
ROBERT HALL.

XII.

TO DR. GREGORY.

ORIGIN AND OBJECT OF THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

Foulmire (near Cambridge), Oct. 30, 1804.

My dear Friend,

You have probably heard of the project of a new Review, called the Eclectic Review, which is intended to counteract the irreligious bias which seems to attach to almost all literary journals. Whether a sufficient number of persons of real talents can be procured to give it permanent credit and support, appears to me very doubtful. Mr. Greatheed has written to request my assistance, and I intend occasionally to write in it. I have at the same time taken the liberty to mention Mr. Gregory, as a person admirably adapted to conduct the mathematical and astronomical department, if he can be persuaded. Mr. Greatheed has accordingly requested me to write to you on this subject, and to assure you that your assistance will be most welcome, and the terms your own. I really think a review of the kind proposed would be a public benefit; as the cause of piety and moderate orthodoxy stands no chance at present. Will you permit me to inform Mr. Greatheed, to whom it is left to treat with writers, that you are willing to contribute to it in the line of mathematics and natural philosophy?

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XIII.

TO WILLIAM HOLLICK, ESQ., OF WHITTLESFORD, NEAR CAMBRIDGE.

ON HIS OWN RECOVERY FROM A SEVERE MALADY.

Leicester, Feb. 26, 1805.

My dear Friend,

I thought it would be some satisfaction to you to hear that I continue, through the blessing of God, perfectly

well. My health, through divine mercy, was never better; nor can I be sufficiently thankful to that good Providence which has recovered me from the gates of death. Motives for gratitude crowd in upon me on every side; and the most I have to complain of is, that my heart is so little alive to their impression.

When, my dear Sir, we look back upon past life, what a series of evidences present themselves of a presiding and parental care! With what propriety may we adopt the language of David: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and with tender mercies!" I am more and more convinced, that nothing deserves to be called life that is not devoted to the service of God; and that piety is the only true wisdom. But, alas! how difficult it is to get these lessons deeply impressed on the heart, and wrought into the whole habit of the mind! I have not yet been at Arnsby, but shall go there in a day or two, and propose to spend about ten days there; and shall probably visit Cambridge in little more than a fortnight. My spirits are rather low, but my mind is composed, and in some measure resigned to the leading and conduct of Divine Providence. The narrow bounds of my experience have furnished me with such a conviction of the vanity of this world, and the illusion of its prospects, that I indulge no eager hopes. If God enables me to do some little good, and preserves me from great calamities, it will be enough, and infinitely more than I deserve; for I have been, in the most emphatic sense of the word, "an unprofitable servant."

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I am, my dear Sir,
Yours affectionately,
ROBERT HALL.

XIV.

TO DR. GREGORY.

ON THE CERTAINTY ATTENDING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

Foulmire, Sept. 4, 1805.

My dear Friend,

Let me beg you will not impute my long silence to a diminution of esteem or affection. It arose simply from my being conscious of my utter inability to make any such reply to your letter as should be in the least degree satisfactory. The subject on which you have touched in your last is so unspeakably intricate, that the more I have reflected upon it the more I have seemed to feel myself lost and perplexed. Of all the problems proposed to the human understanding, the inquiry respecting the certainty of the objects of human knowledge seems the most difficult of solution. If the ideal theory of Locke be true, and there be no resemblance between the impressions made on the senses and the inherent qualities of external objects, we cannot be said to have any absolute knowledge of things without us. In things of an abstract nature, such as the relations of quantity, the consciousness of a distinct agreement and disagreement of our ideas lays a sufficient basis of science, though the objects themselves to which the science is referred be supposed to have no existence. It matters not whether there be a circle in the world, in regard to the certainty with which we accede to the propositions which explain its properties. It is entirely an affair of the *mind*—an arrangement of its internal conceptions. When we transfer our ideas to religion, they appear to attain as much certainty at least as satisfies us in the common affairs of life. We must at once abandon all reasoning, or admit the proofs of design in the works of nature; and design necessarily implies a designing agent. Thus the being of a God appears to rest on the firmest basis, though it may be impossible to determine, from the light of reason, *what* that being is. When we advance to revelation, the evidence of testimony is as clearly

applicable to the supernatural facts of scripture as to any other species of facts whatsoever; and we seem capable of knowing as much of God in his works and ways, as of any other subject. I concur with you entirely, that the *phenomena* of religion are perfectly on a level, in this respect, with any other phenomena; and cannot but think that there is a very exact analogy subsisting betwixt grace and force, together with other principles whose existence we are obliged to admit, though we know nothing of them but in their effects. We can never penetrate beyond effects; we can never contemplate causes in *themselves*, at least in our present dark and benighted condition; so that the sceptical tendency of metaphysical science ought to come in aid of our religious belief, by showing that religion labours under no other difficulties than those which envelope all the fundamental principles of knowledge. The profoundest metaphysician will, in my opinion, *(cæteris paribus.)* be always the humblest christian. Superficial minds will be apt to start at the obscurities of religion, and to conceive that every thing is plain which relates to the objects of science and the affairs of common life. But the profound thinker will perceive the fallacy of this; and when he observes the utter impossibility of tracing the real relations of impressions and phenomena to the *objects out of ourselves*, together with the necessity of believing a First Cause, he will be ready to conclude that the Deity is, in a manner, the only reality, and the truths relating to him the most certain, as well as the most important. Common minds mistake the *deep impression* of the *phenomena* of worldly affairs for clearness of evidence with respect to the objects themselves, than which nothing can be more distinct.

You perceive I can do nothing more on this subject than echo back your own sentiments, which are such as I have long maintained.

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I wish it were in my power to throw some additional light on these intricate points, but I am utterly unable to do it. How far you can introduce any speculations of this sort into your philosophical works with advantage, you are most competent to determine. It may probably have the good effect of admonishing sciolists that the pursuits of science, when conducted with a proper spirit, are not inimical to religious belief.

My health is, through unspeakable mercy, perfectly restored, excepting a good deal of the pain in my back. It will give me much pleasure to see you at Foulmire. Please to remember me affectionately to Mrs. Gregory.

I am, my dear friend, with ardent wishes for your temporal and eternal welfare,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

XV.

TO WILLIAM HOLLICK, ESQ.

ON HIS RECOVERY FROM A SECOND ATTACK.

Feb. 1, 1806.

My dear Friend,

Accept my sincere thanks for your kind letter. Every assurance of respect from old friends, and especially from one whose friendship has been so long tried, and evinced on so many occasions, must afford much satisfaction to a person in my situation. Though Providence has produced a separation, which will probably be of long continuance (and in one sense final), nothing, I am certain, can efface from my mind those impressions of gratitude and esteem with which I shall ever look back on my connexions at Cambridge and its vicinity. With the deepest submission, I wish to bow to the mandate of that awful, yet, I trust, paternal power, which, when it pleases, confounds all human hopes, and lays us prostrate in the dust. It is for Him to dispose of his creatures as he pleases; and, if they be willing and obedient, to work out their happiness, though by methods the most painful and afflictive. His plans are infinitely

extended, and his measures determined by views of that ultimate issue, that final result, which transcends our comprehension. It is with the sincerest gratitude I would acknowledge the goodness of God in restoring me. I am, as far as I can judge, as [remote] from any thing wild and irregular in the state of my mind as I ever was in my life; though I think, owing probably to the former increased excitation, I feel some abatement of vigour. My mind seems inert. During my affliction I have not been entirely forsaken of God, nor left destitute of that calm trust in his providence which was requisite to support me; yet I have not been favoured with that intimate communion and that delightful sense of his love which I have enjoyed on former occasions. I have seldom been without a degree of composure, though I have had little consolation or joy. Such, with little variation, has been my mental state, very nearly from the time of my coming to the Fishponds; for I had not been here more than a fortnight, before I found myself perfectly recovered, though my pulse continued too high. It has long subsided, and exhibits, the doctor assures me, every indication of confirmed health.

With respect to my future prospects and plans, they are necessarily in a state of great uncertainty. I am fully convinced of the propriety of relinquishing my pastoral charge at Cambridge, which I shall do, in an official letter to the church, as soon as I leave Dr. Cox, which, I believe, will be at the expiration of the quarter from my coming. My return to Cambridgeshire was, I am convinced, extremely ill judged; nor had I the smallest intention of doing it, until I was acquainted with the generous interposition of my friends, to which it appeared to me that my declining to live among them would appear a most ungrateful return. I most earnestly request that they will do me the justice to believe, the intention I have named, of declining the pastoral charge, does not proceed from any such motive, but from the exigencies of my situation, and a sense of duty. I propose to lay aside preaching for at least a twelvemonth.

Please to remember me affectionately and respectfully to your cousin, and all inquiring friends, as if named.

I am, my dear Sir,
Your affectionate and obliged Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

P. S. Please to present my best respects to Mrs. Hollick and your daughter.

XVI.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Fishponds, Feb. 15, 1806.

Since I have been here, another stroke has befallen me, under which my heart is bleeding. This is the death of my dear and only brother two years older than myself, who died about ten days since, without a moment's warning. He was reaching something from the chimney-piece, and instantly dropped down, and expired. He had been for some years truly religious, so that I entertain pleasing views respecting his eternal state, which is my only consolation. I feel poignant regret at not having treated him with more tenderness. I longed to have an opportunity of convincing him of the ardour of my affection; which makes me feel most painfully, that in losing him, I have lost the human being, of all others, the most dear to my heart. I hear a voice, in this most affecting providence, speaking to me aloud, "Be thou also ready." I follow the dear deceased in his mysterious journey, and seem to stand on the very boundary that divides two worlds from each other, [while the] emptiness and vanity of every thing besides [God], is deeply impressed on my heart. My hopes, of an earthly kind, are extinguished. I feel my emptiness. but, O, I long to be filled. To be convinced of the vanity of the creature is, I know, the first step to happiness: but what can this avail, unless it be succeeded by a satisfying sense of the fulness and all-sufficiency of God! Through mercy my health is perfectly restored.

XVII.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, OF THE BAPTIST PERSUASION, IN CAMBRIDGE.

ON RESIGNING THE PASTORAL CHARGE.

Leicester, March 4, 1806.

My dear Brethren,

A succession of afflictive dispensations has brought me to the resolution of resigning the pastoral office, which I have for a considerable number of years exercised among you.

I cannot reflect on the numberless and decisive proofs you have afforded me of your attachment during that period, without the warmest gratitude; nor think of a final separation without regret. No people ever received the ministerial services of their pastor with more candour; or evinced, on every occasion, a greater solicitude to contribute to his happiness. It is not necessary to dwell at large on the circumstances which have determined me to relinquish the situation I have so long held. They are partly *local*, in the strictest sense of the word, and in part arise from my recent illness, which suggests the propriety of suspending the ministerial functions for the present.

The dissolution of that union, which has subsisted with such uninterrupted harmony, is the work of Providence, whose operations are often mysterious, but always infinitely wise and gracious. Permit me, my dear brethren, at parting with you, to express the deep and unalterable sense I shall ever feel of the candour, kindness, and generosity, I have uniformly experienced at your hands. You will ever have a distinguished place in my affections and my prayers. It is my earnest prayer, that the truth it has been my humble endeavour to inculcate among you may take deeper and deeper root in your hearts and lives; that your may obey from the heart that form of doctrine into which you have been delivered. May our separation not be final and eternal; but may we be so preserved and sanctified, by the influence of divine grace, that, when the transitory days of our mortal pilgrimage are concluded, we may be permitted to spend a blissful eternity together! Let me make it my earnest request, that you will be careful to choose a minister whose heart is truly devoted to God, and who is determined, like the great apostle, "to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

That your faith may increase exceedingly, and your love one towards another abound more and more, till you arrive "at the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ," and are "presented before him unblamable in holiness," is the habitual and earnest prayer of

Your late unworthy Pastor,
And affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

XVIII.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT CAMBRIDGE TO THE REV. ROBERT HALL.

IN REPLY TO THE PRECEDING.

Dear Brother,

Though your letter, containing your resignation of the pastoral office amongst us, had been expected, in consequence of an intimation previously communicated by you, it was received by us with deep regret; yet, we trust, in the spirit of humble submission to that all-wise Providence, which has seen fit to dissolve the union that has so long and so happily subsisted between us. Be assured, you will ever hold a distinguished place in our most affectionate remembrances; nor shall we forget you in our mingled supplications at the footstool of divine mercy. We hope ever to preserve a grateful recollection of your long and faithful service. We bear you witness, that the prevailing desire of your heart, and the constant object of your labours, was to disseminate amongst us the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; and to fit us, by divine grace, for the enjoyment of a future

world. And we pray, that the important truths which you have so repeatedly and energetically inculcated, may constantly be adhered to by us. In the loss of such a pastor, we have sustained a deprivation of no common magnitude; but, while we lament the painful separation which has taken place, we desire to mingle, with feelings of sorrow on our own account, those of sincere thanksgiving on yours. We rejoice that God has restored you; and we pray that your health and strength may long be preserved; and that He, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, will direct you to whatever place may be most conducive to your permanent health and happiness. As frequently as possible, we hope you will favour us with your friendly visits. The real and ardent friendship which subsists betwixt us, it is our sincere desire, should continue through our mortal existence, and gather fresh strength by every future interview; and we feel no hesitation in believing, that it will survive the grave, and be perpetuated to immortal ages.

In the choice of your successor, we wish to be guided by the motives you recommend, and the principles you have so frequently inculcated; and we entreat an interest in your prayers, that the great Head of the Church will supply us with one zealous for his honour, and qualified to feed the people of his charge with the bread of immortal life.

Now, dear brother, with the greatest affection, "we commend you to God, and to the good word of his grace."

Signed at the desire, and on behalf, of the whole church, this 16th day of March, 1806.

WILLIAM HOLLICK.*

* These, and the two preceding letters to Mr. W. Hollick, will serve to correct the misstatement which has appeared in two or three periodical and other publications: "The intervention of malady separated him from a congregation which he had multiplied in number, and elevated in character; and when he unexpectedly recovered, he found that his office was filled by another." Nothing can be more inaccurate than this assertion; nothing more unjust. The church and congregation, during Mr. Hall's separation from them in consequence of his indisposition, evinced the utmost solicitude on his account. They made arrangements to receive weekly communications as to his progress towards recovery; which were read publicly to the assembled congregation every Sunday. On the permanent dissolution of their connexion, to which the above letters so affectingly allude, they did not content themselves with bewailing his loss; but they exerted themselves most actively and successfully in raising a sufficient sum to purchase for him a handsome annuity, and otherwise contribute effectually to his comfort. During the quarter of a century which intervened between his removal from Cambridge and his death, they continued to manifest for him the most cordial affection, and the highest veneration. His periodical visits to them were seasons of real delight, diffusing (shall I say?) a gleam of pious hilarity and intellectual and spiritual refreshment over all. And more than once has Mr. Hall assured me, that every such visit produced the most unequivocal proofs of their undiminished esteem and friendship. I feel it due to my old and valued friends at Cambridge, a sense of whose kindness, intelligence, and excellence, the lapse of nearly thirty years has not effaced, to record this my humble testimony, to their delicately grateful and generous conduct towards their former invaluable pastor.—ED.

XIX.

TO MR. NEWTON BOSWORTH, CAMBRIDGE.

Leicester, August 26, 1806.

My dear Friend,

My long silence will naturally surprise you till you hear the reason of it. The box which contained your letter has remained at Bristol, unopened, till last week; nor did I receive your very kind favour until a few days since. This is the true state of the case, and must plead my apology for a silence which must otherwise appear so unkind and unnatural.

Permit me to express my acknowledgements for the expressions of regard contained in your letter, of the reality and warmth of which I cannot entertain a moment's hesitation, as they are so perfectly in unison with every part of your conduct during all the years I have had the happiness of knowing you. Your congratulations on my recovery affect and humble me, as I am perfectly conscious of my not deserving the hundreth part of the esteem they imply. If my ministry has been at all blessed, as the means of spiritual good to your soul, God alone is entitled to the praise. I have been, in every sense of the word, an unprofitable servant. When I consider the value of souls, the preciousness of the blood of Christ, and the weight of eternal things, I am ashamed

and astonished to think I could have spoken of such subjects with so little impression, and that I did not travail in birth more, till Christ was formed in my hearers I have no plea for my negligence, no hope of pardon, but what is founded on that atonement and intercession I have endeavoured, though so very faintly, to recommend to others. Every fresh experience of life convinces me, more and more, of the truth and importance of the doctrines I have preached; and, blessed be God! I am sometimes favoured with some experimental taste of their sweetness. As often as I look back on such seasons, I am ready to exclaim,

> "Where can such sweetness be,
> As I have tasted in thy love,
> As I have found in thee?"

O, my dear friend, let us press towards the mark. *We* know where true happiness is to be found. "Let the dead bury their dead;" but let us follow Christ, and aspire, with an intense and increasing ardour, to the heavenly kingdom. Happy shall we be, if we can habitually act as becomes those who are but a few steps from heaven.

I rejoice in your domestic felicity. May it long be continued, and, if possible, increased, without being permitted (and God can attemper all things) to abate your ardour after heavenly enjoyments.

Your account of the reception of Mr. Gregory's book on Mechanics, gives me great pleasure. He

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thus affording a demonstration that the highest scientific attainments are, by no means, incompatible with the simplicity of the gospel. Please to remember me affectionately to him when you write. May God long preserve and bless him!

I thank you sincerely for your proffered assistance in packing up my books, which I shall probably shortly need; for I am tired of wandering, and propose soon to fix upon some place where I may have my books about me.

Remember me to Mrs. Bosworth, and all other friends, as if named. Pray let me hear from you soon and often.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours most affectionately,
ROBERT HALL.

XX.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Leicester, Jan. 2, 1807.

My dear friend Phillips,

I ought long since, to have written to you, but you know what a poor correspondent I am, and how reluctant to write letters. I feel myself much obliged by your kind favour. Your letter, like many other things else in human life, contained a mixture of what excited melancholy, with what produced pleasing emotions. The succession of calamitous accidents which befel our friends in your neighbourhood, is truly singular and affecting. I am happy to hear every one of the sufferers is doing well. I hope it will have the right impression on their minds, by bringing them nearer [to God]; and they will have abundant occasion for thankfulness, even if their respective calamities had been worse. Present my kind and sympathizing respects to each of them, the first opportunity. Your account of Ireland interested me much. The state of the class of inhabitants you describe, is truly deplorable. I am afraid any attempts to remove their ignorance will have little success, unless some methods could be adopted, at the same time, to relieve their excessive poverty. There is a close connexion betwixt the two. I suppose their poverty must be ascribed to the want of encouragement to industry afforded by the landed proprietors, and, perhaps, in some measure, to the hardihood of their constitution, which enables the Irish peasantry to subsist and multiply, where a more feeble race would absolutely perish. You give no account of the Lakes of Killarney, which, I understand, are singularly sublime and beautiful.

You are desirous of some information respecting my situation and intentions. I have not yet taken possession of my apartments at Enderby, having been detained at Leicester by the affliction of my sister and neice; the former is nearly recovered, the latter is not worse, and I intend to go to Enderby to-morrow, or Monday at farthest. Enderby is a very pleasant village, about five miles from Leicester; it stands upon a hill, and commands a very pleasant and beautiful view. I am extremely pleased at the prospect of seeing you there in the spring. I hope nothing will occur to disappoint me. Be assured I shall do every thing in my power to make your visit pleasant. I have no immediate intention of coming to London: there are some friends there, and in the vicinity, it would give me much pleasure to see; but the bustle and hurry of London are little suited to my taste.

* * * * * *

But my times are in the hand of God; and my chief solicitude, if I do not greatly deceive myself, is to please him in all things, who is [entitled] to all my love, and infinitely more than all, if possible; and who is, indeed, my "covenant God and Father, in Christ Jesus." I do not at all regret my past afflictions, severe as they have been, but am persuaded [they] were wisely and mercifully ordered. I preach most sabbaths, though at no one place statedly, and have found considerable pleasure in my work. I have little or no plan for the future, but endeavour to abandon myself entirely to the divine direction. All I have to lament is the want of more nearness to God, and a heart more entirely filled with his love, and devoted to his service. Pray let me hear from you often: a letter from you never fails to give me a high degree of pleasure. Please to remember me affectionately and respectfully to Miss Wilkinson, and to Mr. Wilberforce, should you see him, and to Mr. Beddome's family, in all its branches.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours most affectionately,
ROBERT HALL

Present my kind respects to Mrs. Phillips.

XXI.

TO THE REV. DR. COX.

Enderby, April 26, 1807.

Dear Sir,

* * * * * *
* * * * * *

The lukewarmness of a part, the genteeler part of congregations, with respect to vital religion, is matter of grief to me. Many have the form of religion, while they are in a great measure destitute of the power of it. With respect to the excuses that this class are ready to make for neglecting private meetings, it might not be amiss to urge them to inquire, whence the *indisposition* to devote a small portion of their time to religious exercises arises. If it spring from a secret alienation of heart from devotional exercises, or from a preference to the world, it affords a most melancholy indication of the state of the mind. It is surely a most pitiful apology for declining such services, that they are not commanded by the letter of the New Testament. Whoever says this, virtually declares that he would never give any time to religion, unless he were compelled. The New Testament is sparing in its injunctions of external or instrumental duties. But does it not warn, in a most awful manner, against the love of the world; enjoin fervour of spirit, deadness to the present state, and the directing all our actions solely to the glory of God? How these dispositions and principles can consist with an habitual reluctance to all social exercises of religion, except such as are absolutely and universally enjoined, I am at a loss to determine. If the real source and spring of the neglect of devotional exercises, whether social or private, be an estrangement from God, an attachment to the world, the pretences by which it is attempted to be justified only enhance its guilt.

With respect to the doctrine of election, I would state it in scripture terms, and obviate the antinomian interpretation, by remarking that man, as man, is said to be chosen *to* obedience, *to be* conformed to the image of

his Son, &c., and not on a foresight of his faith or obedience; as also that the distinction betwixt true believers and others is often expressly ascribed to God. "*Thou* hast hid these things."—"To you it is *given* not only to believe," &c. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." As the doctrine of election, however, occupies but a small part of the New Testament revelation, it should not, in my opinion, be made a prominent point in the christian ministry. It is well to reserve it for the contemplation of christians, as matter of humiliation and of awful joy; but in addressing an audience on the general topics of religion, it is best perhaps to speak in a general strain. The gospel affords ample encouragement to all: its generous spirit and large invitations should not be cramped and fettered by the scrupulosity of system. The medium observed by Baxter and Howe is, in my opinion, far the most eligible on these points.

On the other subject you mention,* I perceive no difficulty; none, I mean, to embarrass the mind of a minister. On a subject so awful and mysterious, what remains for us but to use the language of scripture, without attempting to enter into any metaphysical subtleties, or daring to lower what appears to be its natural import? A faithful exhibition of the scripture declarations on this subject must be adapted, under a divine blessing, to produce the most awful and salutary effects.

With best wishes for your welfare,

I am, dear Sir,

Yours affectionately and sincerely,

ROBERT HALL.

XXII.

TO THE REV. DR. RYLAND.

Leicester, Dec. 28, 1808.

——— I hope you continue to enjoy much religious prosperity. The only comfortable reflection, in the present state of the world, is the apparent increase of the kingdom of Christ. His glory, his gospel, his grace, are, I hope, considerably advancing: and how little are all the revolutions of kingdoms, when compared to this! We should rejoice in every event which seems to tend to that issue; and, on this account, I am more than reconciled to the recent intelligence from Spain. I long to see the strong-holds demolished, and "every thing that exalteth, brought into subjection to Christ. How deep an infatuation blinds the counsels of Great Britain! How fatal, may we fear, the intimate alliance of this country with the papal power, which the vengeance of God has marked out for destruction! May the Lord bring good out of evil, and "fill the whole earth with his glory!"

I am now removed to Leicester, and find my situation, on the whole, very comfortable. The people are a simple-hearted, affectionate, praying people, to whom I preach with more pleasure than to the more refined audience at Cambridge. We have had, through great mercy, some small addition, and hope for more. Our meetings in general, our prayer-meetings in particular, are well attended. For myself, my mind and body are both much out of order; awful doubt and darkness hanging on the former, and much affliction and pain in the latter: let me, dear brother, entreat an interest in your prayers.

I am, my dear brother,

Yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

P. S.—In gratitude to God, and to my dear companion, I must add, that marriage has added (a little to my cares,) *much* to my comfort, and that I am indulged with one of the best of wives.

* That of future punishment, I presume.—ED.

XXIII.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Leicester, Feb. 16, 1809.

* * * * * *
* * * Rogers I have not yet found time to read through. I thank you for it, and am much pleased with the piety and spirit of it, as far as I have gone. I have read Zeal without Innovation with extreme disgust, it is written with shrewdness and ability, but is, in my esteem, a base, malicious, time-serving publication. It was lent me by Mr. Robinson, who, in common with all the serious clergy in these parts, disapproves it highly. I suppose the author wrote it to curry favour with such men as the . . . . . and to procure a living. His poverty is to be pitied; but I hope I would rather starve in a workhouse than be the author of such a book. I am afraid there is a party rising among the evangelical clergy, that will ruin the reformation which has been going on in the established church during the last forty or fifty years. * *
* * * * * *

XXIV.

TO A FRIEND IN PERPLEXITY AS TO HIS RELIGIOUS STATE.

Leicester, April 20, 1809.

Dear Sir,

I am much concerned to learn the unhappy state of your mind respecting religion. You may depend upon no one seeing the letter but myself; and I wish it were in my power to say any thing that might be of use. Of this I have very little hope; for the adage might, in too great a degree, be applied to me—"Physician, heal thyself;" as I labour much under darkness and despondency respecting my religious prospects, through the prevalence of indwelling corruptions. What then, my dear sir, can I say to you or to any other? I would

recommend you, above all things, to have recourse to prayer—to fervent, importunate, persevering prayer. Take no denial: if you cannot pray long, pray often. Take the *utmost pains* in preparing your heart, and in the exercises of the closet; for, surely, an assurance of the forgiveness of sin, the light of God's Spirit, and the animating hope of glory, are worth all the labour, and infinitely more than all, we are capable of using to attain them. They are heaven upon earth. From what I know by experience, though it is not with me now as in months past, the enjoyment of God throws every other enjoyment that can be realized or conceived at an infinite distance. Fix it on your mind, my dear friend, as a most *certain* truth, that there is nothing deserves to be pursued for a moment but in *subordination to* God and *for* God, and then act accordingly, and you will probably soon find a strange change for the better. Exposed, as you necessarily are, to the society of many who have either no religion or feel but little of its vital power, you are in peculiar danger of forming slight ideas of its importance; of being taught to look upon it as a *secondary* thing, an occasional law, whose authority is to be interposed, like the law of the land, to regulate other things, instead of looking upon it as a vital, prevailing principle of the heart and life. Many, it is to be feared, never attain the blessings of religion, because they never form that estimate of its dignity which is consonant with the oracles of God. Did it not seem like presumption, I should earnestly recommend the daily perusal, besides the Scriptures (which I take it for granted you cannot omit), of some practical and experimental divinity. We have great store of it:—Doddridge's Rise and Progress; his and Watts's Sermons; and, above all, if I may speak from my own experience, the wonderful Howe—particularly his Blessedness of the Righteous, his Living Temple (the latter part), his Treatise on Delighting in God. Perhaps you will say you have not *time* for this: but here the question recurs again—What is of the most importance for a creature that is to live for ever;—to be rich in this

world, or to be rich towards God? I hope you will pardon the liberty I have taken, from a regard to the motive; which, you will do me the justice to believe, is pure and disinterested.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Yours affectionately,
ROBERT HALL.

XXV.

TO THE SAME.

Leicester, July 17, 1809.

My dear Sir,

I duly received yours. Be assured I sympathize with you in your spiritual trials, having had a large share of them myself. I wish I could adopt the language of Dido to the Trojans throughout—"*Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.*" The "*haud ignara mali*" is fully applicable to myself; but I am afraid I have not yet learned the art of suggesting what may be useful to others in similar circumstances. I want "the tongue of the learned, that I may be able to speak a word in season to him that is weary." I congratulate you on your retaining your religious sensibility: the most dangerous spiritual symptom is apathy, or a stupid indifference to our real situation. While we have feeling enough to complain, we give unequivocal indications of *life*; however disordered its functions or languid its actions may be. What advice, my dear sir, can I possibly give you, but what your own good sense will suggest—that of *giving all diligence, and following on?* "Then," says the prophet, "shall ye know, if you *follow on* to know the Lord." Set a firm resolution against the indulgence of sin in any form. I know you too well to suspect external irregularities; but we are both fully convinced "the commandment is exceeding broad," and that, if we would walk in the light of God's blessed countenance, we must keep the heart with all diligence, or, as the expression signifies, "above all keeping." You will doubtless find your account in the serious, punctual, undeviating attention to private prayer, and reading of the Scriptures.

I feel a pleasing confidence that you are too much impressed with the importance of religion to suffer these exercises to be superseded by any worldly enjoyments, or to be attended to in a slight, perfunctory manner, resting in the *opus operatum*, instead of improving them as means of nearness to God, and growth in grace. Would it not be advisable for you to give yourself up publicly to the Lord?* Might not your solemn engagement to be his, in the ties of a christian profession, have a happy influence on the train of your sentiments and conduct; not to say, that if you truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, you must necessarily feel a desire to keep his commandments?

* * * * * *

I am, dear Sir,
With great respect, yours, &c.
ROBERT HALL.

XXVI.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Leicester, Sept. 1, 1809.

My dear Friend,

Whether I owe you a letter, or you me, I cannot say; but this I know, that it seems a long time since I heard from you. My affection for you renders me uneasy under so long a silence, and makes me anxious to hear how you go on. The last letter you favoured me with gave me a pleasing account of your religious prosperity: your prospects, in this respect, are, I hope, brighter and brighter. Among the very elegant and polite part of your audience, you are too well acquainted with human nature to flatter yourself with *much* success; but you have been honoured as the instrument of

* This phrase implies, among dissenters, uniting in fellowship with *the church*, as distinguished from merely constituting one of *a congregation*.—ED.

drawing a considerable number of the poor and of the middling classes to a place where they had no thought of attending before. Here you will, in all probability, find your most favourable soil. I am sure you will cultivate it with care; and hope you will, under the blessing of God, reap an abundant harvest. Were we but more strongly and abidingly impressed with the value of immortal souls, with what godly simplicity, what earnestness, and what irresistible pathos, should we address them! Perhaps the inequality of the effect produced by different preachers, is to be ascribed more to the different degrees of benevolent and devotional feeling, than to any other cause. Job Orton remarks, in his Letters, that he knew a good man of very slender abilities who was eminently useful in the conversion of souls; which was, in his opinion, to be ascribed chiefly to the peculiarly solemn manner in which he was accustomed to speak of divine things.

I had hoped to have seen you during the summer at Leicester, which would have been a very high gratification, as I know not when I shall reach London. I have no spirits for such an undertaking: my complicated afflictions have left me but half a man. The apprehension of mingled society, of being exposed to various sorts of company, is too formidable for me at present to surmount. I am severely and habitually afflicted with my old complaint: but have I any room to murmur?

* * * * * *

I am happy in my domestic connexion, being blessed with an affectionate, amiable woman, and a lovely little girl, about five months old. My dear wife enjoys a better state of health than for some time past, and the dear infant is quite well. We have lately enlarged our place of worship, and have the prospect of its being well filled. I hope we experience some little of the presence of the Lord in the midst of us. I beg to be most respectfully remembered to Miss Wilkinson, and to thank her for her very kind congratulations and good wishes on my marriage. Remember me also most affectionately to dear Mrs. P——, and to all inquiring friends; and pray let me hear from you very soon.

I am, dear Sir,
Your affectionate Friend and Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

XXVIII.

TO EBENEZER FOSTER, ESQ., CAMBRIDGE.

Manchester, Nov. 4, 1809.

Dear Sir,

I write this from Manchester, to which your letter was sent from Leicester. I am obliged to you for it. It gives me much pleasure to hear of the very flourishing state of the congregation; though I am concerned at the poor account you give me of Mr. Chase's health. I hope he will be speedily restored, and be continued as an extensive blessing among you. The prosperity of the kingdom of Christ is the most delightful object a real christian can contemplate. May he speedily take "upon himself his great power and reign." I cannot but indulge the belief, that real christianity is increasing in the world; and that what we perceive of this kind at present, is but the dawn of a more glorious era which will shortly arrive. The convulsed state of the world, and the limitation of popish power, announce the speedy accomplishment of prophecy, in the triumphant establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Wherever the gospel is preached, there is a disposition, unknown in former times, to attend upon it.

Poor M——! he has finished his career.

When we look back upon those who have been too much addicted to the love of the world, what a dream, what a vanity does it appear; how unworthy the supreme pursuit of a creature who is hastening to his final account! May we, my dear Sir, be preserved from this fatal snare, and possess as though we possessed not.

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XXVIII.

TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Leicester, Jan. 23, 1810.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your kind letter. I am happy to hear you are so comfortably settled, and that God has provided you with a suitable companion, with whom I wish you may enjoy many years of felicity. As to the proposal you are so good as to urge, of my visiting Pembrokeshire next summer, it will be quite impracticable. I have one summer excursion in view already; and a visit to so remote a part would occupy far more time than it would be proper for me to be absent from Leicester. I have had, in a manner, a new congregation to form; so that any considerable absence is attended with serious inconvenience, as the people are, as yet, by no means compacted and consolidated. I consider it as the first duty of my life well to cultivate my own field, which is such, at present, as demands all my care; which, I may say, with humble gratitude, it rewards, the Lord having, in various instances, set his seal to my poor labours. The congregation which I serve consists mostly of the poor, many of whom are, however, "rich in faith;" so that I can truly say I never found so much encouragement in my work as since I have been here. The effect of time, and of spirits broken by a series of afflictions, has been to make me very reluctant to travelling. Nothing but the claims of absolute duty can surmount that reluctance. My ambition is to spread the savour of the knowledge of Christ in the connexion where I am placed, content to leave the more enterprising and brilliant career of an evangelist to persons of more active and ardent minds. It would give me much satisfaction to meet my dear friend Phillips anywhere, and more especially under your hospitable roof. That pleasure, however, I must postpone till I go to London, or until he will favour me with a visit in Leicestershire. I shall be always happy to see you, and to hear of your success and prosperity in your great work. Of this you say you can speak nothing at present. The congregation, I fear, from the character of its former pastor, has sunk into a very lethargic state. It will be your study and ambition, I am persuaded, to awaken them, and to recall them to the power of that religion which "makes all things new." Whatever speculative difficulties you may have felt, or may still feel, you can be at no loss to discover, that the warm and affectionate preaching of Christ crucified is the grand instrument of forming lively Christians. May you, in this glorious attempt, be abundantly honoured and blessed.

I return you my warmest thanks for every expression of esteem and affection with which you have honoured me, and remain, with sentiments of high esteem, dear Sir,

Your affectionate Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

XXIX.

TO WILLIAM HOLLICK, ESQ.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. HOLLICK.

Leicester, July 6, 1810.

My dear Friend,

I sincerely sympathize with you, in the heavy stroke with which your heavenly Father has seen fit to visit you in the removal of your dear partner, with whom you have so long trod the paths of this weary pilgrimage. I hope she has gone to eternal rest; and you, my dear friend, will, I trust, meet her in that world where no separation, no sorrow or sin, will ever enter. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him."

I have endeavoured already, and often shall, "to spread your case before the Lord," and to entreat him to support you under, and sanctify you by, this dispensation. You have learnt, my dear friend, the terms on which all earthly unions are formed; the ties on earth are not perpetual, and must be dissolved; and every enjoyment, but

that which is spiritual,—every life, but that which is "hid with Christ in God,"—is of short duration. Nothing here is given with an ultimate view to enjoyment, but for the purpose of trial, to prove us, and "to know what is in our hearts, and, if we are upright before God, to do us good in the latter end." You had, no doubt, often anticipated such an event as the inevitable removal of one from the other; and I hope neither of you were wanting in making a due improvement of the solemn reflection, and laying up cordial for such an hour. Still, I am well aware that the actual entrance of death into the domestic circle is unutterably solemn, and places things in a different light from what we ever saw them in before. You seem, and it is with much pleasure I perceive it, fully aware,—thoroughly apprised of the true improvement to be made of this heavy blow, which is undoubtedly intended to quicken your preparation for a future world. It loudly says to you, and to all, "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." God grant it may be eminently sanctified, by weaning you more completely from this world, and "setting your affections" more entirely and habitually "on the things that are above." You will then, in the midst of that deep regret such a loss has necessarily inspired, have cause to bless God that you were afflicted.

We have been, for some time, in expectation of a visit from you. I hope you will not disappoint us, nor delay it long, as my dear wife expects in a very few months to be confined. We shall rejoice to see you, and shall be happy to contribute, in some measure, to your solace and relief. My wife, whose health is extremely delicate at best, and very often interrupted, desires to be most respectfully and affectionately remembered to you. Please to present my kindest and most sympathizing regards to your daughter, and love to inquiring friends.

I remain, dear Sir, with best wishes and prayers, your affectionate and sympathizing friend and brother,

ROBERT HALL.

XXX.

TO R. FOSTER, JUN., ESQ., CAMBRIDGE.

Leicester, July 12, 1811.

My dear Sir,

I thank you for your favour, inclosing a draught for £75. 2s. 9d.; and am highly gratified with the genuine sentiments of piety contained in your letter. It has been a peculiar satisfaction to me, for a long time past, to hear of your decided attachment to the cause of God; and it is my earnest prayer that the life of God, which his grace has commenced, may flourish more, till it issues, as it infallibly will, in the fruit of eternal life. Go on, my dear Sir, in the course you have begun; dare to be singularly good, and to follow Jesus "out of the camp, bearing his reproach,"—a reproach that will be found "greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." You are already the joy of good men, and a shining hope of the church; and it is impossible to calculate the eminent advantage you may be of to the interests of religion, in the sphere where Providence has placed you.

Your admonitions I take in good part. I am not without a consciousness of my not having exerted my small abilities to the extent I ought in the cause of religion; but I find strange and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, arising in part from a certain fastidiousness of taste, which renders me dissatisfied, and even disgusted, with all my performances. My extreme ill state of health must also be taken into the account. I am seldom free from pain, which is often very severe.

* * * * *

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours most affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

XXXI.

TO JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE, ESQ., DENMARK HILL, CAMBERWELL.

Leicester, September 16, 1811.

My dear Sir,

I have not relinquished my intention of publishing the substance of the sermon delivered at Prescott-street; though I think it will be most proper to print it in the form of a charge, in which it was first delivered. You may rest satisfied I shall not omit making mention of the occasion on which it was preached at Prescott-street, and embracing the opportunity of recommending, as far as es in my power, the new institution to the attention and patronage of the religious public. The reason of the sermon not appearing sooner, has been, principally, an almost uninterrupted struggle of painful discouragement, arising from its appearing so contemptible under my hand.* The truth is, I am tormented with the desire of writing better than I can; and, as this is an obstacle not easily overcome, I am afraid it will never be in my power to write much.

* * * * *

XXXII.

FROM MR. GUTTERIDGE TO MR. HALL.

PROPOSING THAT HE SHOULD PREACH A SERIES OF LECTURES IN LONDON.

Dear Sir,

I am now about to address you on the subject of our conversation when last at Denmark Hill. I then suggested to you the wishes of many friends, that you would consent to visit London the following spring, and make arrangements for spending a longer time with us. Several persons have been inquiring if there were a probability

* The sermon here referred to is that on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister.—ED.

of such an event being realized; but I did not wish to trouble you farther on the subject till it became needful to do so.

My idea has been, that if you would spend six weeks at least with us, a course of lectures might be established, to be preached by you, that, under a divine blessing, without which all our efforts are vain, might be productive of much good at the present season. A course of lectures, say you;—on what subject? I reply, on any subjects that have a tendency to counteract the impiety and irreligion of the world in which we live: and surely you will admit this is latitude sufficient. I am aware that some objections will arise in your mind. You will perhaps indignantly ask, 'Does he think I will go to London to preach for money?' You may rely upon it, I have too much regard for you to wish you to do any thing that might even be interpreted to your discredit. But is it dishonourable in a man, who has a family that have claims upon him, to do that which may promote their comfort? Is the fair and honourable exercise of talent to be deprived of a suitable remuneration? Is not "the labourer worthy of his hire?" And although he who is called to preach the gospel is not to be actuated by motives of "filthy lucre," yet he is nowhere called to despise the cup of blessings that Providence may put into his hands, "who giveth us all things richly to enjoy." All this I am saying, upon a presumption that your friends will cheerfully raise a subscription, of which you will know nothing, *save the contents.*

I should propose to obtain places of worship well adapted for evening lectures; probably one in the city, and one on the other side Temple Bar; and that, on the Lord's-day evening, and also one evening in the week, you might alternately preach there. This plan would leave your sabbath mornings at liberty to oblige particular friends, or to supply destitute congregations; and in this respect, I would propose to fix you to Prescott-street, if I dare. The time that appears to me most suited for the purpose would be the beginning of April; and then you would be in Town, through the missionary meetings.

There is also, in the beginning of May, a most important service to be performed for the "Orphan School;" *the only school*, among protestant dissenters, where the children are *maintained* as well as *educated*, and which has been upon the decline, but is now, we hope, reviving. I should rejoice to see you become the advocate of so extensive and valuable an object; and, if you fall in with my design, you will, I hope, undertake it. I hope Mrs. Hall and the children will come with you: you have friends who will be glad to take them in; but if you would prefer a lodging, we can, I doubt not, manage that to your satisfaction. Thus have I given you the outlines of a plan which is subject to any alterations you may propose. Let me beg you to take it into your serious consideration, and to send me soon a favourable answer.

I am, dear Sir, affectionately yours,

JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE.

XXXIII.

TO JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE, ESQ.

IN REPLY TO THE PRECEDING.

Leicester, Feb. 29, 1812.

My dear Sir,

I have taken into my most serious consideration the proposition laid before me in your last letter, and have sought the advice of those friends whose opinion I judged most fit to be relied upon. Some of them are decided in favour of my compliance, others leave the matter in suspense. My people at Leicester have given their cheerful consent, on the supposition of its appearing to me to be the path of duty. Upon making it frequent matter of prayer, I am inclined to think it may be my duty to fall in with the ideas entertained by you and others upon this point, provided my health admit. The difficulties and discouragements attending the affair appear to me so formidable, that nothing could induce me for a moment to think of encountering them, but an apprehension that I might, by yielding to them, be going against the will of God. I am habitually alarmed at the thought of my having already too much hid my little talent in a napkin; and should consequently rather risk the most unpleasant imputations than increase that score of guilt. It *ought* to be (alas! how weak my heart!) "a small thing with me to be judged by man's judgement: there is one that judgeth, even the Lord." The business, however prudently conducted, will expose me to the censure of pride and presumption, on the part of many; and my deficiencies will disappoint, I am certain, the expectation of my partial friends. Nevertheless, supposing it possible some good may result, I am inclined to say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord my God." An impediment lies in the way, however, at present, which must be removed before I can think of it; that is, the state of my health. My old complaint has grown upon me so much of late, that it is with *great difficulty* I can go on with my stated work. I have been for some time under the necessity of taking fifty, and sometimes a hundred, drops of laudanum every night, in order to procure any rest. The pain has been both violent and very nearly constant. It is quite out of the question to think of a journey to London, unless I am better. So situated, whatever arrangements are made, connected with the proposal you mention, must be *conditional;* and I shall, if you judge it fit to give it any further consideration, inform you previously whether I can come or not. It seems to me there are some objections to the *place* of preaching being alternate: will not this interfere with its being well known? the same objection seems to apply to the appointment of different places. These, however, and all other points, I wish to submit to the decision of friends. Mrs. H. will, I believe, not be able to accompany me. She desires to be most respectfully remembered to you and Mrs. G. Please to present my best respects to Mrs. G. and Miss G., and believe me to be, with great esteem,

Dear Sir, yours affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

XXXIV.

TO JOSEPH GUTTERIDGE, ESQ.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Leicester, March 29, 1812.

My dear Sir,

I delayed writing to you as long as I could, that I might the better ascertain the state of my health at the time when it was proposed I should undertake my journey to London. I now feel myself under the necessity of informing you and my other friends, that my health is such as renders it impossible for me to think of engaging in such a matter. It is with the utmost difficulty that I can go through my stated duties. I am ready to suspect, that the complaint under which I have so long laboured is intended to "weaken my strength by the way," and, at no great distance, to bring me to "the house appointed for all living." The pain is almost incessant, and often so violent as to put my patience to its utmost exercise. I have now for many weeks been under the necessity of taking seventy or eighty drops of laudanum every night, and am often obliged to rise and repeat the draught before I can procure any rest. It appears to me preposterous to think of coming to London in such a situation. I can scarce ever sit up an hour together; lying down is my constant position. I consulted some judicious friends on the subject of your proposal, and above all, made it my business to seek direction from the Fountain of wisdom. The result was, that I came to a determination to suspend the affair upon the state of my health about the time my engagements, in the event of compliance, were to commence. Providence, by having placed me in my present circumstances, appears to have decided the affair; and in that decision I perfectly acquiesce. My mind is, to say the truth, relieved from a considerable weight; for nothing but a fear of neglecting a possible opportunity of doing some little good, could have reconciled me for a moment to the proposal you, I am persuaded with the best intentions, were

pleased to make. The appearance of vanity and self-consequence attached to it, always presented itself as a most formidable obstacle; but this I had made up my mind to surmount, reposing, in the midst of much sinister [interpretation,] on the rectitude of my intentions, and my conscious desire of complying with the leadings of Providence. You, my dear Sir, have been actuated, I doubt not, in this affair, by a solicitude to promote the interest of religion, as well as by motives of the truest friendship, as far as concerns myself; and you will not fail to [reap] the satisfaction which arises from the possession of such sentiments. For the trouble you have been at in making the necessary arrangements, you will be so good as to accept my sincere acknowledgements.

With truest affection and esteem,

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours constantly,

ROBERT HALL.

XXXV.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Leicester, April 16, 1812.

My dear Phillips,

I was extremely gratified to hear once from you again; and if you knew how much pleasure it yields me to receive a letter from you, I flatter myself you would indulge me oftener. I have little to communicate that will be interesting to you, but could not let so affectionate an epistle lie by long unanswered. My state of health, I need not tell you, has long been extremely ill: it appears to me as if my constitution was breaking up; and I have little doubt, unless my malady takes a favourable turn, it will, ere it be long, reduce me to the dust. I am not better than my fathers: I am deeply conscious I am corrected less, yea, infinitely less, than my iniquities deserve. I hope I am more anxious to see my heavy affliction sanctified than removed. Whether it would be best for it to be removed, may well be doubted; of

the admirable benefits arising from sanctification, both in time and eternity, there can be no doubt. I presume the Lord sees I require more hammering and hewing than almost any other stone that was ever selected for his spiritual building, and that is the secret reason of his dealings with me. Let me be broken into a thousand pieces, if I may but be made up again, and formed by his hand for purposes of his mercy. I see more and more of the unspeakable blessedness of being made like God, and of becoming partaker of his holiness. I see it, I say, but I do not attain; or, at least, in so unspeakably small a degree, that I have every moment reason to be abased, and "repent in dust and ashes."

My ministry continues, through mercy, to be considerably blessed in awakening sinners. I cannot but hope the church and congregation are in a very promising state. We are in perfect harmony, and we have frequent additions. Last Lord's day se'nnight I baptized thirteen, and others stand ready. Blessed be the Lord! My strain of preaching is considerably altered; much less elegant, but more intended for conviction, for awakening the conscience, and carrying home truths with power to the heart. Our congregation is plain and serious, with a sprinkling of genteel people; but none in the church: and, indeed, if any saving fruit has been reaped from my ministry, it has been almost entirely among the middling and lower classes.

Yesterday we had our second jubilee anniversary of the Bible Society for Leicestershire, a happy, harmonious meeting, with one little exception. On the church side, several clergymen spoke; but no dissenter. I augur the most glorious and important consequences from the Bible Society. I have just finished the perusal of Mr. Scott's answer to Bishop Tomline. He has demolished the bishop entirely. I find but little in Mr. Scott's views against which I can object. It is somewhat loosely written, but full of argument, instruction, and piety. There is a trait of egotism in the good man which had better been avoided. He quotes almost entirely from his own works. It is well for the bishop his rank excuses him from

replying to it. He would make a miserable figure. I thank you for your favourable opinion of my discourse. It is flat; but if it be in the least adapted to do good, I ought to rest satisfied. I am much rejoiced to hear of your intention of visiting Leicester. You must spend a sabbath with me. I heard Mr. —— twice, [as he passed] through Leicester: he is a young man of some talents, of a good deal of brilliancy, but miserably defective in simplicity. I am afraid a vicious taste is gaining ground, both among preachers and hearers; all glare and point, little to the understanding, and nothing to the heart. But my paper admonishes me to close, with my best respects to Mrs. Phillips, Miss W——, Mr. and Mrs. Beddome, &c., in which Mrs. H. joins me;

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your affectionate and constant Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

XXXVI.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO MRS. ANGAS, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

Leicester, May 8, 1812.

Dear Madam,

Though I have nothing particular to communicate, I knew not how to let Mrs. O. proceed to Newcastle without dropping a line to acknowledge your kind letter, and present my gratitude for the interest you are pleased to take in my welfare. The esteem of the pious and excellent of the earth, I always consider as a very distinguished privilege; though the possession of it is not unmingled with mortification at the consideration of my deserving it so little, and my perfect conviction, that did they know me more they would esteem me less. It ought to humble most persons, to reflect, that for a large portion of the respect in which they are held, they are indebted to ignorance; to the necessary unacquaintance with each other's hearts. The Great Supreme is the only being

from whom nothing is to be feared on this head; the only one who may be safely trusted with the worst secrets of our hearts. "His mercy endureth for ever." He also is able, and only he, to correct the obliquities he discovers. The Leicester news you probably hear from all quarters. I go so little into society, that the report must be strong and loud which reaches me.

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XXXVII.

TO MR. NEWTON BOSWORTH, CAMBRIDGE.

Leicester, April 23, 1813.

My dear Sir,

I am ashamed of not having earlier answered the kind letter I received from Mrs. B., for which I beg you will present my hearty acknowledgements. I must also thank you for your book on the Accidents of Life. It is a most entertaining production, and will, I hope, be extensively useful in preventing or remedying a large portion of human calamity. It is plainly dictated by the same spirit that breathed in a Howard and a Hanway, and will entitle you to a portion of their reward.

As I hope to see Cambridge in the course of this summer, you will not expect from me a very long letter. I recollect with fervent gratitude, the kindness I there met with; mixed with much shame, to think it should have been lavished on such an undeserving object. When I recollect the course of my ministry at Cambridge, I feel continual matter of condemnation. 'Do you preach better now, then?' you will perhaps say. In one respect I do not preach half so well:—I do not bestow near so much attention on my composition: but I trust I do insist on more interesting and evangelical topics. A greater savour of Jesus Christ does, I trust, breathe through my ministry, in which it was formerly greatly deficient.

But why do I speak so much of myself?—We last Monday held our annual [meeting of the] Bible Society. It was more numerously attended than ever, and delightful to see clergymen and dissenting ministers sit on the same seat, and ardently engaged in promoting the same object, with perfect unanimity. We cannot say of the past times, that they were better than the present. I think the present age is greatly improving: it must improve, in proportion as the grand catholicon is more universally applied. * * * *

It would have given me great pleasure to have seen you this summer at Leicester: I am sorry your letter indicates no intention of that sort.

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I am much delighted with reading a new translation of Mosheim's Commentaries on the affairs of the Christians before Constantine. It appears to me one of the most instructive theological publications that has appeared for a multitude of years. With kind remembrances to Mrs. B. and all inquiring friends,

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

P. S. We have had an irreparable loss in the removal of dear Mr. Robinson. It has been a most affecting event, and has left a chasm which can *never* be filled up. Last Wednesday I endeavoured to improve the event by a suitable discourse.

XXXVIII.

[When Mr. Hall visited Cambridge, in the summer of 1813, he preached a sermon to the young persons belonging to the congregation there with which he had formerly been connected. The next day they assembled, and addressed to him a letter of thanks, to which the following is his reply:—]

To my young Friends, of Mr. Edmonds's congregation:
Thursday, 1813.

My dear young Friends,

I feel greatly obliged to you for your very affectionate testimony of your esteem, and rejoice to find my feeble

attempts to impress religious sentiments were not altogether without effect. Your letter breathes a spirit of unaffected piety, which it is impossible to witness without emotion. I hope the Lord will enable you to persevere, and that, "being planted in the house of the Lord, you will flourish in the courts of your God, and bring forth fruit even to old age." Be sober, be vigilant; watch closely over your own hearts, and be much in earnest supplication to the Fountain of grace. Bless God, for having inclined your hearts to seek him; and doubt not that he will most graciously afford all the succour necessary to enable you to finish your course with joy.

That you may very greatly profit by the means of grace with which you are favoured, and become the joy of your parents, the hope of your minister, and great examples of pure and undefiled religion, is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young Friends,
Your affectionate Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

XXXIX.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. W. BUTTON.

Leicester, October 25, 1813.

Dear Sir,

I have taken into consideration the proposal you have made. I know not what to say to it. If I shall part with the copyright of the little tracts, it may be, possibly, an injury to my family, and put it out of their power to publish a complete edition. Your proposal is very handsome; but this is one of my objections to it. Another is, it is so long since the tracts made their appearance, and several so short, and their subjects so miscellaneous, that I am afraid it will have an ostentatious appearance. I hate the appearance of vanity: I have so much of it in my heart, that I am ashamed it should display itself to the eyes of the world. As to my sermon, I am doing something to it at intervals. I have, indeed, nearly written it out in the rough, but I am so much disgusted with it, as usual, that I can by no means let it appear, unless it is in my power greatly to improve it.*

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XL.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS, CLAPHAM.

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF HIS OWN SON.

Leicester, Feb. 28, 1814.

My dear Friend,

I am greatly obliged to you for your kind and consolatory letter, replete with those topics whence alone true consolation can be deduced. The stroke has been very severely felt by us both, but certainly most by dear Mrs. Hall. She was doatingly fond of our lovely boy. For my own part, I was not at all aware my affection for him was so strong, until he was removed from us: my anguish was then great. It seemed to me as if I felt more on this occasion than I should at the loss of either of my others. This feeling, I suspect, was delusive, and arises from our being incapable of estimating the strength of our attachment to any object till it is removed. I was disappointed in his being a boy; for [recollecting] my own extreme and portentous wickedness, I fancied there was something in the constitution of boys peculiarly tending to vice, and adverse to their spiritual interests. I had also remarked that females seemed much more susceptible of religious impressions than men. On these accounts I trembled for his salvation, and did not feel that gratitude for the blessing vouchsafed me which I ought. I suspect I greatly displeased God by my distrust of his goodness, and that he saw it meet to adopt this method of chastising me. May it be sanctified as a means of making me humble, heavenly, and submissive. It is a very solemn consideration, that a part of myself is

* The sermon here alluded to was never published

in eternity; in the presence, I trust, of the Saviour. How awful will it be, should the branch be saved, and the stock perish!

Pray for me, my dear friend, that this may not be the case; but that I may be truly sanctified, and permitted to walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

Mrs. Hall has been very ill, occasioned in a good measure by the shock she has received, but is better. She is looking forward, with considerable anxiety, to her confinement, which she expects in less than three months. She is so extremely weak and delicate, that I have very painful apprehensions respecting the issue. My *wish* and endeavour is, to leave her, myself, and my dear children, in the hands of God. But how difficult it is to do so! Let me, once more, entreat an interest in your prayers.

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XLI.

TO THE REV. W. BUTTON.

Leicester, Feb. 3, 1815.

My dear Sir,

I am much concerned to hear of your disorder in your eyes: it is, indeed, a great affliction, and demands the exercise of much submission to the wise Disposer of all events. I am afraid it has had, and will have, a great effect in depressing your spirits. Remember, my dear brother, the Lord means to do you good by all his several dispensations. He has already given you his Son; and how "shall he not with him freely give you all things?" He has conferred upon you spiritual discernment and heavenly light: how infinitely more important than the "light of the body," which in all eyes must soon be darkened! I hope, however, if it is a cataract, you may get relief: that is a disease which I understand has frequently been cured. Say, then, my dear friend, with David, "Why art thou disquieted within me? I shall

yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." It will be, and has been, my habitual prayer, that you may be strengthened, comforted, and relieved.

With respect to the reviewing Mr. ——'s sermon, I must be excused. I have entirely done with reviewing: it is an occupation, of all others, I dislike, and shall entirely give it up. If you wish me to publish, you should never wish me to review; for you are not aware what a serious interruption it is. I compose very slowly; and what I have written in the Review has been a *very* great interruption. I have read Mr. ——'s sermon with much pleasure; it is judicious, serious, and affecting; but I am well aware how extravagantly his friends at ——— have always overrated his talents; and were I to review, and express myself in such terms only as the occasion would justify, I should mortify, instead of gratifying. In truth, reviewing at the request of particular friends is a snare for the conscience. I never wished any person to review for me.

XLII.

TO THE REV. DR. FLETCHER, OF BLACKBURN, NOW OF STEPNEY.

Leicester, Feb. 21, 1815.

Dear Sir,

I duly received the five-pound bill which your friend has been so kind as to appropriate to the Baptist Mission. He may depend upon its being faithfully applied to the purpose for which it is intended, and you will be so good as to thank him in my name for it.

I most sincerely beg your pardon for not having replied to your kind letter: the truth is, not sitting down to reply to it immediately, the impression I had upon my mind afterwards was, that you did not wish or expect me to reply. I recollected only that it contained a pretty pressing remonstrance with me for not publishing more; a subject on which I have often been urged, much to my

concern and vexation. It pains me, my dear Sir, to be condemned and reproached upon a subject which is sometimes a source of more internal uneasiness than is generally supposed. I am far from being satisfied with my own conduct in this particular, but know not how to remedy it. It is not indolence, I can truly say, which prevents me; but a certain fastidiousness and difficulty of being pleased, which really rises to the magnitude of a mental disease.

I feel myself, in all my performances, so short of that standard which I have formed in my own mind, that I can truly say I contemplate my little productions with a kind of horror. If I could dismiss this feeling, I should much oftener try the patience of the public. That what I have written meets with your approbation cannot fail to encourage me; it is "*laudari à viro laudato:*" but permit me to express my surprise, that you should express yourself in terms so extremely disproportioned to my merits.

I shall be happy to hear from you, whenever you are disposed to write; and remain,

Dear Sir, with high esteem,
Your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

XLIII.

TO THE REV. DR. FLETCHER.

Leicester, May 26, 1815.

Dear Sir,

With respect to Mr. Fuller's last moments, I have very little to communicate. His complaint was of a nature that left him very little opportunity of conversing with ease and composure. He was oppressed with a prodigious load of corporeal misery. He said, I believe, more than once, "All misery centres in me, and I cannot die." In a letter he dictated to Dr. Ryland, a few days before his death, he expressed himself thus:—"My state of mind is, in one word, this; no despondency, no raptures." He said to his friends, he felt that trust in Christ, that he could plunge into eternity. He was a prodigious sufferer during his last illness. He said to Dr. Ryland, "I have written much and said much against the abuse of the doctrine of grace, but that doctrine is all my support in the prospect of eternity. I have no hope of being saved, but through the free sovereign grace of God, flowing through the atonement of Christ. I recollect nothing very particular respecting his first introduction into the ministry. Dr. Ryland will, I believe, compile a pretty extensive memoir of him. He has been strongly urged so to do. He was in many respects the most memorable man it has ever been my happiness to know, and his loss will be deplored as irreparable. He possessed good sense in a more perfect degree than any person I ever knew; embraced every object with a clearness, facility, and precision, almost peculiar to himself. He certainly possessed genius in a very high degree; but it was more a modification of intellect than a vigour of imagination; though in the latter faculty he was not defective. I loved and esteemed him more than I can express; and how his loss can be supplied in the mission, I am at an utter loss to conjecture. But God is all-sufficient. Let me entreat your prayers to God that he would provide. I feel much gratified at your intention of improving the death of our most lamented and venerable friend. Wishing you much of the blessing of God in your important engagements, and begging to be remembered to Mrs. F., though unknown,

I remain, dear Sir,
Your affectionate Friend and Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

Friday.

XLIV.

TO DR. RYLAND.

Leicester, June 17, 1815.

My dear Brother,

I am sorry you should continue to importune me about that wretched oration, which it is my *unalterable* resolution never to print. It was not fit to be delivered, much less to be presented from the press. I may be mistaken; but I always conceive that it is a respect due to the public, whenever we appear before them, to do our best, and not to put them off with a weakly or more deformed part, of our intellectual progeny. I laboured under an extreme depression of spirits; I was perplexed, between an imperfect written composition, a sort of funeral sermon delivered the last Sunday, and an attempt at extempore speaking. It would neither be respectful to Mr. Fuller nor to the public, nor justice to myself, to publish such a wretched piece of inanity. In delivering the oration at all, I performed a service for which scarce any money would have bribed me; but to have the publication of it demanded, under pain of the displeasure of Mr. Fuller's friends, is intrenching rather too much upon the independence of private judgement. Do not understand me, my dear Sir, as at all displeased with you for urging the matter: I am speaking only upon the *supposition* that Mr. Fuller's family or friends demand the publication.

As you have intimated a willingness to publish memoirs, I would strongly recommend publishing neither the sermon nor the oration. They are utterly unnecessary if the memoirs are published; not only so, but they would stand in each other's way. When a biography is promised, it is not, I think, usual for the same person to publish a funeral sermon previously. It is slaking the public curiosity prematurely. If you persist in your intention of publishing memoirs, I should feel no objection to taking an opportunity of testifying my profound esteem and friendship for dear Mr. Fuller, in some form which you may deem most eligible; but let me, my dear

Sir, hear no more of the oration. My resolution is unalterable upon that subject.

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* * * As far as my acquaintance with sober Calvinists extends, they do not object to the doctrine of disinterested love, so much as to the naked and abstracted form in which some of the American divines have presented it. A portion of love to God, resulting from a spiritual perception of his intrinsic beauty, enters, I have no doubt, into the essence of true religion; but some of the Americans have given a prominence to this subject, as appears to me, beyond what exists in scripture.

My work on mixed communion will be out, I trust, in about a fortnight. It is written, I hope, in a christian spirit, and is calculated to do good rather than harm. I am most perfectly convinced that the Baptist sentiments will never prevail upon the opposite system. My sincere wish is, that truth and candour may be promoted in the church.

I remain,
Your affectionate Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

XLV.

TO MR. JOSIAH CONDER.

Leicester, Sept. 1815.

Dear Sir,

I owe you many apologies for not sooner noticing the letter you were so good as to address to me a considerable time since. The only reason I can plead for my silence is, the pain it necessarily gives me to put a negative upon wishes warmly, and, as I believe, sincerely expressed. After having so frequently stated my repugnance to writing reviews, I feel myself at an utter loss to express the same sentiment in terms more strong or more efficacious. There is no kind of literary exertion to which I have an equal aversion, by many

degrees; and, were such things determined by choice, it is my deliberate opinion I should prefer going out of the world by any tolerable mode of death, rather than incur the necessity of writing three or four articles in a year. I must therefore beg and entreat I may not be urged again upon a subject so ineffably repugnant to all the sentiments of my heart.

From what I have seen of the recent execution of the work especially, I am convinced my assistance is not in the least needed. It is, I believe, growing daily in reputation, and, I hope, in circulation; and I have no doubt but that, under your skilful management and that of your coadjutors, its reputation will not only be sustained, but will be sufficient to engage far superior assistance to mine. I admire the Bible Society inexpressibly: but how is it possible to say any thing in its praise or vindication, which has not been said a thousand times; or where would be the safety of depicting, in their true colours, the character and conduct of that whited sepulchre? Besides, let me add, my dear Sir, that my other engagements are such, that the business of reviewing is incompatible with them, unless I were to form the resolution of having nothing to do with the press, or others for me. I feel myself much honoured by the expression of your kind regard, and beg leave to assure you that I am, with the truest esteem,

Your sincere Friend,
And obedient Servant,
ROBERT HALL

XLVI.

TO THE REV. W. CHAPLIN, BISHOP STORTFORD.

Leicester, Monday, Sept. 22, 1815.

My dear Sir,

I hope you will excuse my neglect in not replying to your very kind invitation. I designed fully to reply to it without delay; but one circumstance occurred after another, in that busy scene, to occasion delay until it was too late. It would have given me, I flatter myself, at least as much pleasure as to yourself, to have proceeded to Stortford, and spent a day or two there. I shall ever retain a lively and grateful impression of the happy hours I have passed at Stortford, and of the distinguished politeness and attention on your part, which have chiefly contributed to render them so. But the fact is, while I am at Cambridge, the present claimants upon my time are so numerous, that, unless I could considerably protract my stay, I find it next to impossible to make excursions to any considerable distance.

Providence has so disposed the bounds of our habitation, as to preclude that intercourse which I can truly say I frequently recall, but never without emotions of warm affection and gratitude. Nothing but death will efface from my recollection and heart the manly sense, the dignified politeness, and Christian piety, which have so frequently rendered your conversation so delightful. I rejoice to hear of your health, and prosperity, and usefulness; and that dear Mrs. Chaplin is spared to you. I bless God, that though we are separate for a time in the flesh, we are, I trust, joined in the Spirit, and permitted to make mention of each other in our prayers; and shall shortly, I humbly hope, be allowed to spend an eternity together. I often think, with much emotion, of our dear and venerable friend and father, Mr. Palmer. I feel that I have lost a rock in him: the loss of no man in that period of life would have affected me in any proportionable degree. But, alas! I shall probably soon follow him; and it becomes us, it becomes me at least, at my age, to make it my great concern that my own death may be holy. *Inter nos*, I could have wished the character of our dear friend, by Mr. Toller, had been a little heightened and warmer coloured. It is like a portrait that is not very defective in likeness, but has lain long in a damp place. There is one thing in your letter which gives me sincere pleasure, which is, that you have sometimes thought of favouring me with a visit at Leicester. Let it not be one of those schemes that die in thinking of. We have a spare bed, and such accommodations as

are indeed very inadequate to what you are accustomed to, but such as I flatter myself you will put up with. Be assured, there is no person it would give me more pleasure to see under my roof, than Mr. Chaplin, accompanied with Mrs. C. We will divide the labour of the sabbath.

I am, my dear Sir, with high esteem,
Yours most affectionately,
ROBERT HALL.

XLVII.

TO DR. RYLAND.

Leicester, Oct. 25, 1815.

My dear Sir,

I have availed myself of the opportunity of returning your manuscript, by Mr. James. I am much pleased with it, as far as it has proceeded, and, judging from this specimen, have no doubt it will give satisfaction to the friends of our invaluable deceased brother, as well as the religious public at large. I found the whole narrative, respecting his child and his first wife, exceedingly affecting and interesting. I think you have done right in retaining it, as it sets his domestic character in a most pleasing light. It shows how perfectly compatible is great tenderness of heart, and an attention to minuter duties, with great powers of intellect, and an ardent pursuit of great objects. Biographers have usually been too sparing of such details. How delighted should we have been with such an exhibition of the characters of Edwards, Howe, and other illustrious Christian heroes! ——— has written to Mrs. B., earnestly importuning me to review his Life of Mr. Fuller, which is completed to the last chapter. I need scarcely say that I absolutely declined, informing him that it was impossible for me to do it, without a violation of honour and consistency. I suppose his book will be out shortly. I hope and believe, however, it will not prevent your work from obtaining a considerable circulation. Though I highly disapprove of ———'s publication, it is not impossible that posterity may obtain a juster idea of the character of our excellent friend, by comparing them, than by either of them separately. I am afraid my dear brother will be as sparing of his shades as he of his lights. Though his [Mr. Fuller's] faults were trivial indeed, compared to his excellencies, yet they were, in my view, very apparent; and, as is generally the case in very forcible characters, they possessed a certain prominence: on the whole, however, it will be long before we look on such a man.

XLVIII.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. W. BUTTON.

Leicester, Jan. 1816.

When you see Mr. Ivimey, will you be so good as to give my kind respects to him, and thanks to him for his kind attention, and that of his fellow-editors. Tell him I shall take his suggestion into serious consideration; but whether I shall contribute to the [magazine] or not, I cannot say. I never yet felt the smallest inclination to read or to write in these sorts of miscellanies. With respect to the widows, anxious as I should be to promote their welfare, I have not the presumption to imagine my writing would be of any material benefit. To the whole class of publications, reviews, magazines, &c., I avow myself a total alien and a stranger.

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XLIX.

TO THE REV. THOMAS GRINFIELD, CLIFTON.

Leicester, Feb. 5, 1816.

Rev. and dear Sir,

With respect to the salvability of socinians, for myself, I feel no hesitation. Their state appears to be clearly

decided by such Scriptures as these; "He that *seeth* the Son, and *believeth* on him, shall have everlasting life;" "He that *hath* the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." How can they be said to have the Son, who reject him in his distinguishing, his essential character, as the *Saviour* of the world; and how can he be a propitiation for sin to them who have no faith in his blood? When it is asserted that we are justified by faith, I can understand it in no other sense than that we are justified by a penitential reliance on his blood and righteousness. In rejecting the most fundamental doctrine of the gospel, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, they appear to me to deny the very essence of Christianity. Their system is naturalism, not the evangelical system; and therefore, much as I esteem many individuals among them, I feel myself necessitated to look upon them in the same state, with respect to salvation, as professed infidels.

I am concerned, truly concerned, to find you speaking in terms so extremely disproportioned to my merits. While I feel myself gratified by the esteem of the pious and the able, praise so intemperate, I must confess, brings to my mind most forcibly the mortifying recollection of my own deficiencies.

I remain, with much esteem,

Your obliged Friend and Servant,

ROBERT HALL.

L.

TO DR. RYLAND.

Leicester, April 10, 1816.

My esteem for your character is such, that it is impossible for me to differ from you in opinion, or decline complying with your wishes, without considerable pain. I feel that pain on the present occasion. I am truly concerned to find your purpose is to form an auxiliary society at Bristol, to have public days, &c. &c.; being deeply

convinced of the truth of that axiom of our Lord's, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" or, as Campbell translates it, "is not ushered in with parade." The Baptist Society has prospered abundantly, with the blessing of God, under a different management; and the unobtrusive modesty of its operations has been one of its strongest recommendations. That society has done much, and said little; it has shown itself in its effects, not in its preparations. I am much grieved that it is about to relinquish that praise, and to vie with [others] in the noise and ostentation of its proceedings. It reminds me of the fable of the frog and the ox. * *

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* * * Why should we at last imitate what we have so long condemned? Why should we attempt a competition in a point of view in which we are sure to appear to a disadvantage? The expense of collecting ministers from remote places is not small; and, supposing their expenses to be borne out of the public fund, (and the situation of few allows them to travel at their own expense,) it will, I fear, more than counterbalance the pecuniary advantages resulting from the efforts at publicity. I have serious apprehensions that the ostentatious spirit which is fast pervading all denominations of Christians, in the present times, in the concerns of religion, will draw down the frown of the Great Head of the Church, whose distinguishing characteristic was humility. He did "not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." I am persuaded nothing can be more opposite to *your own* disposition than such a mode of proceeding, on which account I am the more surprised you should be induced to lend it your sanction. There appears to me a very simple and efficacious mode of supporting the Baptist Mission, without noisy appeals to the public. Let every Baptist minister make an annual collection in his congregation, and apply to his more opulent members and hearers besides, for their annual subscriptions; and all the money will be raised which ought to be raised by our denomination. With respect to others, the success of the mission, attested by its

periodical reports, will not fail to make the right impression. The best auxiliary societies, in my humble opinion, that can be devised, are already prepared to our hands in regular, organized churches, and in the certainty of meeting some hundreds of professing Christians every sabbath-day. I hope, my dear brother, you will not be offended with the freedom of these remarks. Were I to consult my inclinations, an excursion, in the pleasant month of July, to Bristol and to Wales, would be highly gratifying; but, from the considerations I have suggested, I must beg leave absolutely to decline your kind invitation. I do exceedingly deprecate the precedent about to be set at Bristol.

Your advice respecting my intended publication came too late. It was already in the press. I hope it will do no harm, if it does no good. I think the question of very considerable importance, and the abettors of free communion have been too languid in their exertions. I intend, my dear Sir, no personal reflection; but mention it as a general remark.

LI.

TO DR. RYLAND.

Leicester, May 27, 1816.

——— I read the letters of Mr. Fuller, on Robinsonianism, with much delight and approbation on the whole; but I think he has, as he was rather prone, carried the matter too far. For my part, I am far from believing the innocence of mental error on the one hand, or the *sinfulness* of every particular error on the other. I suspect that there are religious mistakes, which result from the circumstances and the imperfections of the present state, for which many good [men] will never be called to account; though I am far from supposing this extends to a denial of the great distinguishing principles of the gospel. On this occasion, I am disposed to adopt the old adage, *In medio tutissimus ibis.* The letters are admirable for their piety, and their masculine vein of reasoning.

With respect to Scotland, I must absolutely decline it. I have been already five weeks absent from my pulpit, on account of illness; and it would be extremely injurious to my congregation, to incur so long an additional absence. In truth, I am little fitted for distant excursions, on account of my liability to be attacked with such violent pain, which renders me a burden to myself and to all about me.

LII.

TO DR. RYLAND. (EXTRACT.)

June 19, 1816.

——— I sympathize, most sincerely, in the joy you must feel, as a parent, from the baptism of your daughter. I hope and pray you will ultimately have the pleasure of seeing all your children walking in the truth. I already begin to feel the spiritual interests of my dear children a frequent source of painful solicitude. Let me beg an interest in your prayers, for their conversion.

LIII.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS.

Leicester, May 12, 1816.

My dear Friend Phillips,

It is long, very long, since I had the pleasure of seeing or hearing from you. For the latter I can account in some measure, from the displeasure you conceived at my treatment of your servant, who, at your request, called upon me in the way to Harborough. I do freely confess myself to have been much to blame in that particular. My conduct was not such as ought to have been shown to any one; much less to a domestic of

yours, who called, at your request, to make friendly inquiries respecting my welfare. I sincerely beg your pardon, and also the pardon of the young woman, for that impropriety. In justice to myself, I must tell you how I was situated. When your servant called I was engaged in secret prayer; the door made fast. My servant-girl made a violent clamour at the door: I kept silence, intending her to understand that it was my wish not to be interrupted at that time. She continued, however, to knock at the door, as though she was determined to break it down. At length, I was under the necessity, fearing some accident, to open it; and being much irritated at the unwelcome interruption, and at the rude carriage of my servant, when I came to understand the errand on which the young woman came, I could not surmount my agitation sufficiently to give her the reception I ought. I was visibly pettish and chagrined. Such is the true state of the case; and I may observe as some apology for me, that sometimes the incessant interruptions I meet with, by people calling from a distance, is such, especially in summer, as to leave no time at all, sometimes not half an hour a day, that I can call my own. This operating upon a mind fond of retirement to an excess, sometimes almost drives me to distraction. The irritation and agitation it sometimes produces is inconceivable. I do most devoutly wish my friends would never give any commission to strangers to call upon me. The sight of strangers, especially when I cannot leave them when I please, is frequently distressing to me in a very high degree. But though I mention these circumstances as an apology, I am far from meaning to justify myself. I am aware of the extreme impropriety of indulging that irritability of temper, and am truly concerned at the instance of it, to which I have adverted. Let me indulge the hope, my dear friend, that this disagreeable circumstance will not put a period to that friendship which I have always so highly esteemed, and which has formed no inconsiderable part of the solace of my life. I have loved you ever since I knew you; and my attachment has increased exactly in proportion to my opportunities of

acquainting myself with your character. I hope you will forget and overlook this unpleasant business, and permit me again to class you amongst my dearest friends.

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LIV.

TO DR. GREGORY.

ON THE DEATH OF MR. BOSWELL BRANDON BEDDOME.

Leicester, Nov. 2, 1816.

My very dear Friend,

I have just received your letter, and cannot lose a moment in expressing the deep sympathy I take in the affliction arising from the melancholy tidings it announces. Alas! my dear friend, Boswell Beddome! My eyes will see thee no more! The place which once knew thee shall know thee no more! How many delightful hours have I spent in thy society—hours never more to return! That countenance, beaming with benevolence and friendship, will be beheld no more until the resurrection morn, when it will rise to shine radiant with immortal brightness and beauty. How thick and solemn the vicissitudes of death and calamity in that amiable and respectable family, the Beddomes! What awful reverses and catastrophes! Surely their heavenly Father must have destined them to some distinguished station in the eternal edifice, with whom he has taken such pains in hewing, cutting, and polishing. The dealings of God towards our dear Boswell have been at once severe and tender; and never, perhaps, were the preparations of mercy to be traced more distinctly, than in the events which have recently befallen him: the faculties extinguished for a while, to be restored; an antedated resurrection; as though God had determined to recast his whole nature into a crucible, previous to its being poured into the mould of eternity. I have been delighted to hear from various quarters, and particularly from Mr. Alexander, of the sweet, tranquil, and devotional state of his mind,

subsequent to his first attack; and had flattered myself with the hope of life being protracted to a distant period. But God's ways are not as our ways; nor his thoughts as our thoughts. After purifying our dear friend in the furnace of affliction, he judged it fit to cut short his work in righteousness. Be assured, my dear Sir, I deeply sympathize with you, and dear Mrs. G., both in your sorrow and your joy, on the present occasion. You have to sing of mercy and of judgement. The loss of such a parent must be long and deeply regretted; but there is so much to console and to elevate in this event, taken in all its bearings, that the tears you shed partake of a tender triumph. Our dear friend has reached the goal and gained the prize, which we are still doomed to pursue with anxiety and toil. May we, my dear friend, be quickened in our progress, by this most impressive event, and learn more effectually than ever to secure the one thing needful.

Your company at Leicester, and that of Mrs. G., would afford me the most exquisite pleasure: pray let me have it the first opportunity. My health, through mercy, and that of my family, are, at present, good; though I have, during the past year, met with awful mementos of my latter end.

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I beg to be most affectionately remembered to Mrs. Gregory, and every branch of the Beddome family, in which Mrs. Hall joins me; and remain, invariably,

Yours most affectionately,

ROBERT HALL.

LV.

TO REV. THOMAS LANGDON, LEEDS.

Leicester, March 12, 1817.

My dear Friend,

I am extremely concerned to hear of the ill state of your health, which, I fear, from what I have occasionally heard, has been declining for some time: it is my earnest prayer and hope the Lord may restore it, and spare you many years, for the good of your family and of the church. It is a great mortification to me that I am situated at such a distance as renders it impracticable for me to see you often; but I retain, and ever shall retain, the strongest sentiments of friendship and esteem, and the remembrance of innumerable acts of kindness and attention from you in my early days. Those days are fled, and we are both now far nearer to eternity than then; both, I hope, nearer to consummate blessedness. For yourself, I feel a full persuasion that your removal (may it be at a distant period!) will be unspeakable gain.

To come to the business of your letter, I believe I am expected this year at Hull, and that it is wished to collect for the mission. As far as I can judge, it will probably be about the time you mention, in August; but this remains to be settled with Mr. Birt, from whom I have not yet heard. When I hear from him, and the time is fixed, I will let you know; and I hope I shall be able to comply with your wishes, by taking Leeds in my way home, as I expect to proceed thither from Cambridge. It will considerably facilitate my executing this plan, if your service is on a week-day, as I fear it will be quite out of my power to add another sabbath to my excursion. It will give me very high satisfaction to see you once more in the flesh, if it be only for a day or two; the time, I am afraid, must be very short.

I am far advanced in my answer to Mr. Kinghorn, and expect it will be in the press in a very few weeks. I am afraid it will be a more hasty performance than I wish. It is exactly as you say: there is more difficulty in disentangling his arguments, than in replying to them. He is unquestionably a clever man. I hope, however, that I have succeeded in showing the utter fallacy of the far greater part of his reasoning; but the public must judge.

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I desire to be affectionately remembered to Mrs. Langdon, and remain,

Your most affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LVI.

TO DR. RYLAND.

Leicester, Aug. 8, 1817.

——————You are the best judge, but I am quite at a loss to perceive the utility of having all the missionary sermons preached at one season. Such a method of procedure makes more noise and parade than if they were preached at separate times, it is true; and this is probably the chief motive for preferring it, with those who appear studious of ostentation in religious exertions: but to a person of your disposition, I presume it would rather be repulsive. There is something I do not like in these perpetual suggestions of Mr. ——, respecting the deficiency of your collections for the Baptist Missions. If annual collections are made in each congregation, and such individuals are solicited to subscribe who are able and disposed, what can with propriety be done more? This perpetual struggle who shall get most money, and the theatrical and abominable arts exerted to procure it, prognosticate ill to the real interests of religion. There is one simple and effectual mode, in my opinion, of promoting the mission, which has never yet been tried on an extensive scale; namely, an annual collection in every baptist congregation which is attached to its interests. If such a measure were resolved upon in your association, it would soon spread to others, and would shortly become a standing practice in all our congregations: and their number is such, that, with the sums which would incidentally fall in from other quarters, the pecuniary resources of the society would be as great as we ought to aspire to. As to collecting a great number of ministers together, for the purpose of making a collection, nothing, in my opinion, can be more injudicious. Besides, why should more assemble than are wanted? and what a waste of money attendant on the travelling of so many from distant parts! I do most earnestly wish, my dear brother, you would set yourself in earnest towards promoting annual collections, and making them universal.

I feel extremely concerned for the uneasiness you have felt. My poor prayers will not be wanting in your behalf: but, alas! how far am I from having power with God! Do not, my dear brother, let your spirits sink; you are dear to God, and he will, I am persuaded, support you, and bring forth your "righteousness as the light, and your judgement as the noon-day."

LVII.

TO WILLIAM HOLLICK, ESQ.

Leicester, August 11, 1817.

My dear Friend,

It is with great concern I have heard of your illness. Mr. Edmonds informed me [some time ago that] you were very poorly; but I have been much concerned to hear that you have since been much worse, and that you suffer much from your complaint.

Mrs. Hall and myself have been long anticipating the pleasure of seeing you shortly at Cambridge, and of renewing the pleasure we derived from our former visit. But, alas! how uncertain are all human prospects! how vain to depend upon any thing short of the promises of "Him who cannot lie!"

I hope, my dear friend, you enjoy the consolations of that religion you have been so long acquainted with, and the value of which is never more sensibly felt than under the pressure of affliction. How empty and delusive does the world then appear; and how unspeakably cheering that "good hope through grace," which the gospel inspires! To look up to God as a reconciled and compas-

sionate Father,—to know that "He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities," and that he "made an everlasting covenant with us, well ordered in all things, and sure,"—these are wells of everlasting consolation. You, my dear friend, are, I trust, no stranger to these sure cordials and supports; and, with these, should you be called to pass through "the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear no evil; his rod and staff will comfort you." It is impossible for me to suggest any thing to your mind, with which you are not already acquainted; but, might I be permitted to advert to my own experience, I should say, that I have found nothing so salutary as to turn the mind immediately to the Saviour: "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." To pray immediately to Christ, to cast ourselves incessantly upon his power and grace, as revealed in the gospel, appears to be the best antidote to every tendency to despondency. I have no doubt that we are much wanting to ourselves, in not having more direct dealings with the Saviour, or not addressing him now in the same spirit in which he was applied to for the relief of bodily disease. He is exalted at the right hand of God, for the express purpose of dispensing pardon, peace, and eternal life to all that humbly seek his aid; and, wonderful condescension! he has declared "he will in no wise cast out whomsoever cometh unto him."

If I had not been particularly occupied with my answer to Mr. Kinghorn, which is now in the press, I should probably have been at Cambridge before this. Mrs. H. has suspended all thoughts of coming under present circumstances; but if it would be any particular gratification to you to see me, I will give up every engagement in order to see you; though it can be but for a few days. I desire to bless and adore the grace of God, in the signal change which has been wrought in the mind of Mr. N., to whom, as well as your daughter, Mrs. H. unites with me in affectionate remembrances.

I am, dear Sir,
Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

LVIII.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. W. BUTTON.

Jan. 5, 1818.

I am much surprised at the rapid sale of my sermon; which I impute, not so much to its intrinsic merit, (for I think I have printed better,) as to the occasion. Mr. Combe proposes to publish two editions more, making seven in the whole, as speedily as possible. I am afraid he will overdo it: if you are of that opinion, do stop him.* You will have an opportunity of judging while the fifth and sixth are selling.

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LIX.

TO THE REV. JAMES PHILLIPS. (EXTRACT.)

Leicester, March 6, 1818.

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What a loss would dear Mr. Hughes be to the Bible Society, and to the religious world in general! I beg to be most affectionately and respectfully remembered to him. Please to inform him, when you see him, how ardent is my desire, and that of thousands, that his most valuable life may be spared and protracted to a distant period. I rejoice to hear he is better, and hope he will be spared to the prayers of the religious public. I am quite of opinion, with you, that the admirable temper and prudence of Mr. Hughes have been as serviceable as the more brilliant talents of Mr. Owen: both admirable men,—*par nobile fratrum.*

* The Sermon here alluded to, was that on the death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales. Mr. Combe's anticipations as to its sale seem to have been more accurate than those of the author, for it has gone through *sixteen* editions.—ED.

LX.

TO THE REV. THOMAS GRINFIELD, CLIFTON.

WHAT DOCTRINES ARE FUNDAMENTAL?

Leicester, Aug. 5, 1818.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your favour of July 2d, which ought to have been answered sooner, you will not expect me to enter deeply into the subject in the compass of a letter. A very few, and possibly very superficial remarks, must suffice.

1. Whatever opinion may be formed about fundamentals, it cannot affect the solidity of my reasoning, which is directed to this:—that no church has a right *(in foro conscientiæ)* to demand more, as a term of communion, than that church deems essential to salvation. The evidence of this proposition is quite independent of the question, what is essential to salvation.

2. That some truths are fundamental, besides those you have enumerated, appears to me sufficiently manifest from the word of God. If Christ is set forth as a propitiation, (or mercy-seat—*ἱλαστήριον,*) *through faith in his blood*, then, faith in his blood is fundamental; and, as the apostle is speaking of him as a *propitiation*, faith in his blood must mean a trust in him, under that character. But how can this consist with his being a mere prophet or martyr, or with the denial of his atonement? Again, —"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," &c. Every orthodox interpreter supposes this is intended to represent Christ crucified, or lifted up on the cross, as a divinely-appointed source of cure to our spiritual maladies, and consequently an expectation of spiritual benefit from him, as crucified. But how does this consist with the idea of his death, as a mere circumstance confirming his doctrine, exclusive of any proper influence it is supposed to exert in the pardon of sin? He is said to be "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" then justification, or acceptance with God, is the consequence of faith in him as the great antitype and completion of the legal sacrifices and ceremonies. We

are everywhere affirmed to be justified by that faith of which he is the object; and if the conceptions entertained by the socinians of that object are *essentially* different from ours, then must their faith in that object be equally so, and one or other of them essentially defective or erroneous. I am aware I have transgressed the canon you have laid down, which excludes a reference to particular texts. I have done so, because I am by no means satisfied respecting the justness of that canon. I am at a loss how general reasoning can ascertain the point in question, exclusive of an immediate appeal to the words of scripture. It is with God to determine what is essential to be believed, in order to salvation; and his determinations on this subject can only be ascertained by attentively weighing the sense of scripture. It is true, different parties interpret particular passages differently: to quote these, or similar passages, to a socinian, would, it is confessed, be to little purpose. But *you*, my dear Sir, profess *not* to be a socinian: with *you*, therefore, the only question ought to be, Is the proposition, which affirms faith in the atonement to be fundamental to salvation, a legitimate inference from the commonly-received, or orthodox interpretation, of these passages? If it is, we must either renounce our orthodoxy, or admit (however painful it may be) that inference. If the revealed method of salvation—revealed (I say) fully after the completion of the canon—is a cordial acceptance of Christ as the propitiation for the sins of the world, they who reject, deliberately and habitually, every idea of vicarious atonement, cannot be in that way. The belief of the messiahship of Christ was unquestionably held by the ancient heretics, or they could have made no pretension to be considered as christians in any sense; yet we know in what light they were regarded by the primitive christians: and why should they who deny the miraculous conception, the incarnation, and the atonement of the Son of God, be considered in a more favourable light? You yourself, not satisfied with the general proposition—the messiahship of Christ, descend to particular doctrines, *e. g.* the resurrection of the dead. But

to me it appears, that the collective moment of the doctrines I have mentioned is far more than that of the resurrection of the body, considered apart from the doctrine of immortality or a future life. In short, I can see no possible medium between giving up the doctrines already [mentioned], and asserting their fundamental importance; since, supposing us to interpret aright the passages on which we found them, their belief is everywhere conjoined with saving benefits. Whether we interpret these passages aright, is in no degree the question before us; but, solely supposing our interpretation correct, whether the *fundamental nature* of the doctrines in question is not a necessary consequence.

I return you my most sincere thanks for the favourable opinion you express of my performance; and that you may be guided into the midst of the paths of judgement is the sincere prayer of

Your obliged Friend and Servant,

ROBERT HALL.

LXI.

TO THE REV. JOSEPH IVIMEY, LONDON.

Leicester, Feb. 20, 1819.

My dear Sir,

I had intended, long since, to thank you very sincerely for your very valuable present of your two volumes of the History of the Baptists. I think it is highly creditable to yourself, and to the denomination to which you belong. I read them both with much interest and delight, and have seldom derived equal information and pleasure from any similar work. It will be a permanent monument of your talent, and devotedness to the cause of religious truth and liberty. You have brought forward a great deal of curious information with which the public were little, if at all previously acquainted. I was much pleased with your style of narration: it is perspicuous, lively, and perfectly unaffected. With respect to reviewing it in the Baptist Magazine, I am sorry to be

obliged to put a negative on your wishes. I have the *utmost aversion* to the whole business of reviewing, which I have long considered, in the manner in which it is conducted, a nefarious and unprincipled proceeding, and one of the greatest plagues of modern times. It was infinitely better for the interests of religion and literature when books had fair play, and were left to the unbiassed suffrages of the public. As it is, we are now doomed to receive our first impression and opinion of books from some of the wickedest, and others of the stupidest of men; men, some of whom have not sense to write on any subject, nor others honesty to read what they pretend to criticise, yet sit in judgement upon all performances, and issue their insolent and foolish oracles to the public. To abolish the practice of reviewing would be the greatest benefit a single man could confer on the public. At the same time, while *such things are*, the support of one like the Eclectic, upon sound principles, becomes a necessary evil. Your work wants no such artificial props.

Earnestly wishing your valuable life and labour may long be spared,

I remain, with much esteem, dear Sir,

Your obliged Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LXII.

TO MRS. TUCKER.

Leicester, April 16, 1819.

Dear Madam,

I feel myself much gratified and honoured by your kind and affectionate expressions of remembrance of an old friend; who, though long detained by circumstances from personal intercourse and correspondence, will never hear the name of Mrs. Tucker with indifference. I am delighted to hear from you; and to learn that, with all the changes effected by time, to which you so affectingly allude, the ardour of mind and warmth of sensibility, by which you were formerly distinguished, remain unim-

paired. How wonderful, how complicated, the mazes of Providence through which we are conducted in our pilgrimage to eternity! Could we foresee the trials which await us, the agonies and vicissitudes we are called to pass through, life would be insupportable; but we are led, like the blind, by a way that we know not; and strength is dealt out just in proportion to our day. Let us, my dear friend, look forward, and remember that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Let us hope that the fiercest part of our mortal warfare is passed, and that the evening of life will be more tranquil than the morning and the noon. May our deep experience of the mutability and vanity of the present shadowy state be improved into a perpetual motive for cultivating that heavenly-mindedness which is the only effectual antidote to the miseries of life. With respect to my visiting Plymouth, I have heard nothing of it from any quarter; and, should I be invited on the occasion you mention, it will be utterly out of my power this summer to comply with it. My engagements are already too numerous. But of this, my dear Madam, be assured, that should my steps be directed to Plymouth at any time during your life, I shall never for a moment think of taking my abode but at your house, with your permission, should I be invited by a prince. You little know me, if you suppose that rank and fashion would have the smallest influence in inducing a forgetfulness of ancient friendship. My chief inducement to visit Plymouth would be the pleasure of once more seeing and conversing with Mrs. Tucker. With my kindest remembrances to Mr. Tucker, I remain,

Dear Madam,

Your affectionate Friend,

ROBERT HALL

LXIII.

TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON.

Leicester, Jan. 11, 1820.

My dear Friend,

As Mr. Ryland is passing through Leeds, I take the liberty of troubling you with a few lines, just to let you know how I and my family are, and to express my undiminished affection and attachment to one of my oldest and best friends. I look back with renewed pleasure on the scenes through which we have passed, and deeply regret that Providence has placed us at such a distance from each other, that our opportunities of intercourse are so few. I hope the period will arrive when we shall spend an eternity together, and look back with mingled wonder and gratitude on all the way the Lord God has led us. What a scene will that present, when the mysterious drama shall come to a close, and all the objects of this dark and sublunary state shall be contemplated in the light of eternity!

"O, could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise;
And see the Canaan that we love
With unbeclouded eyes!"

I am very sorry to hear that you have been so much afflicted with your asthmatic complaint. It is high time you retired from your school, and procured a house nearer your meeting. I am persuaded your long evening walks are extremely prejudicial. Do, my dear friend, be prevailed upon to give up your evening lectures. It is what you owe to your family, to be as attentive as possible to your health. "Do thyself no harm," is an apostolic injunction.

I was much affected to hear of the death of dear Mr. Robert Spear. It must have been peculiarly distressing to the amiable youth I saw at your house. He was a most excellent man, and has, no doubt, had an abundant entrance into the joy of his Lord. May we be followers of those who thus inherit the promises. My health is, through mercy, very good. Mrs. Hall is at present very

much indisposed by a bad cold and oppression of the lungs; but, through blistering and bleeding, is, through mercy, better. Let me indulge the hope, that next summer you and Mrs. Langdon will visit me at Leicester. Be assured that the company of no friend would give me more pleasure.

Please to remember me affectionately to Mrs. Langdon, to your family, and to all inquiring friends, as if named. I am,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LXIV.

TO A GENTLEMAN AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Leicester, April 30, 1821.

Dear Sir,

I am considerably at a loss how to answer your letter. I sincerely sympathize with you in the perplexity you experience on a very high and awful subject. For my own part, I acquiesce in the usual and popular interpretation of the passages which treat on the future doom of the finally impenitent. My reasons, in brief, are as follows:—I assume it as a maxim, that we are utterly incompetent to determine, *à priori*, what is the amount of guilt incurred by such as reject the overtures of the gospel, any further than God has been pleased to make it the subject of express revelation; that the terms expressive of the duration of future misery are as forcible as the Greek language supplies; that the same term is applied to the duration of misery as to the duration of happiness, or even the eternity of God himself (Matt. xxv. 46; Rev. xix. 3); that the exclusion of the impenitent from happiness is asserted in the most positive terms—"they shall *not* see life," &c. &c., that "their worm dieth *not*, and their fire is *not* extinguished;" that positive terms may be understood in different degrees of latitude, but this is impossible respecting negative terms, since a negation admits of no degrees.

If the eternal misery of a certain number can be rendered conducive to a greater amount of good, in relation to the universe at large, than any other plan of action, then the attribute of goodness requires it: for I take it for granted, that the Supreme Being will adopt that scheme, whatever it be, which will produce the greatest quantity of happiness on the whole. But our faculties are too limited, and our knowledge of the laws of the moral world, and of the relation which one part of the universe bears to another, too imperfect, to enable us to say that this is impossible. For aught we know, therefore, the existence of eternal misery may not only consist with, but be the necessary effect of supreme goodness. At all events, it is a subject of pure revelation, on the interpretation [of which] every one must be left to form his own judgement. If the milder interpretation can be sustained by a preponderating evidence, I shall most sincerely rejoice; but I have yet seen nothing to satisfy me that this is the case.

I would only add, that, in my humble opinion, the doctrine of the eternal duration of future misery, metaphysically considered, is not an essential article of faith, nor is the belief of it ever proposed as a term of salvation; that if we really flee from the wrath to come, by truly repenting of our sins, and laying hold of the mercy of God through Christ, by a lively faith, our salvation is perfectly secure, whichever hypothesis we embrace on this most mysterious subject. The evidence accompanying the popular interpretation is by no means to be compared to that which establishes our common christianity; and therefore the fate of the christian religion is not to be considered as implicated in the belief or disbelief of the popular doctrine.

Earnestly wishing you may be relieved from all painful solicitude on the question, and be guided by the Spirit of God into the paths of truth and holiness, I remain,

Your obedient humble Servant,

ROBERT HALL.

TO RICHARD FOSTER, JUN. ESQ.

Leicester, July 21, 1821.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your kind favour, (which I should have acknowledged sooner, but was not at home,) including a draught for 77*l.*, and odd.

With respect to my sermon on the Trinity, I entered into no metaphysical disquisition whatever, I merely confined myself to the adducing passages which go to prove a plurality of persons in the blessed Godhead: such as the plural name of God in the Hebrew, the use of plural pronouns, the injection of plurals in the name of God coupled with singular verbs, the use of the terms, Makers, Creators, &c. I adduced Isaiah, saying, "The Lord hath sent me and his Spirit," &c. From the New Testament, I mentioned the baptismal form, the salutation to the Corinthians. To these I added the principal passages usually adduced in proof of the divinity of Christ and the personality of the Spirit. In short, it was a mere appeal to the letter of Scripture, without the smallest attempt at metaphysical refinement. I considered that doctrine continually as a doctrine of pure revelation, to which reasoning can add nothing but darkness and uncertainty. It appears, however, to me replete with practical improvement, being adapted to exhibit the part which each person in the blessed Trinity sustained in the economy of redemption, in the most engaging light, and to excite the utmost ardour of gratitude. The time was when I maintained the dual system, supposing the Holy Spirit to be an energy; but I have long found abundant reason to renounce that doctrine, and now find much complacency in the ancient doctrine of the Trinity.

As you mention the [meeting-house] being shut up, I hope it is to heighten it. I have no doubt that the extreme heat and closeness of the place must have a very injurious effect on the health both of the minister and people. I hope you continue comfortable, and that the Lord is giving testimony to the word of his grace. The

interest of religion, in a church which I served so long and so happily, will ever lie near my heart.

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I am your affectionate Brother,
ROBERT HALL.

LXVI.

TO THE REV. ISAIAH BIRT.

Leicester, May 29, 1822.

My dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you, for your very cheerful compliance with my proposal respecting supplying and preaching for our school during my visit to Kidderminster. It is an arrangement which gives high satisfaction to our people. The prospect of spending a little time with my dear and honoured friend, is, I confess, my chief inducement for proposing it. I should be very unhappy if I did not spend a little time with you, at least once a year; and as Providence has happily placed us in the same general vicinity, I shall always eagerly embrace the opportunity it affords. Friendship is the balm of life; and the thought that time must dissolve, ere long, the tie that has so long united us, would be melancholy indeed, were it not for the consoling recollection of a reunion in a better world: "Let us love one another, for love is of God;" and I hourly hope we are both training up for a world of perfect love. I am certain of it respecting *you*. O that I had as great an assurance respecting myself! But I have a feeble hope, which I would not exchange for a world!

With respect to the other part of the arrangement, having heard nothing from Tamworth as yet, it seems premature to say any thing of it. But I must say, that I can by no means comply with it. My lecture is on Wednesday, to which I justly attach a great importance; and the arrangement you mention would occasion my absence *two* Wednesdays, which I would not incur for any ordination whatever. Ordination services,

as they are now conducted, I consider as of more show than use. The presence of one or two ministers, along with the church, accompanied with prayer, and laying on of hands, and a few serious exhortations, would be a genuine scriptural ordination. Nothing can be more distant from this, than the manner in which these things are at present conducted. Suffice it to say, that I can by no means consent to be absent two lectures for such a purpose. You may, therefore, expect to see me on Friday at Birmingham. I beg to be most affectionately remembered to dear Mrs. Birt, and to dear Mrs. Tucker and her husband.

I am your affectionate Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LXVII.

TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON OF LEEDS.

ON THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER.

Leicester, January 9, 1823.

My dear Friend,

I am much concerned to hear of the heavy bereavement with which it has pleased God to afflict you and dear Mrs. Langdon, by the unexpected removal of your most amiable daughter. I never saw a young female whose character impressed me with higher esteem. I cannot wonder for a moment that your tears flow freely on her account. It is, indeed, a most severe and afflictive stroke, which none but a parent, and the parent of such a child, can duly appreciate. I feel myself highly honoured and gratified in the recollection of having possessed any share in her esteem.

Still, my dear friend, there is much mercy mingled with the severity of the dispensation. It is an unspeakable mercy to be able to reflect on the decided piety of the dear deceased, which so eminently prepared her for the event you so deeply deplore. Nor is it a small alleviation of the anguish resulting from such a stroke,

to reflect that the time is short, and the end of all things is at hand. Painful as is the thought to all your friends, to you, my dear friend, it must be familiar, that, in all probability, her separation from you will be but of short duration; and that she has entered, a little while before you, into that blessed eternity for which you have long been waiting.

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LXVIII.

TO THE REV. THOMAS GRINFIELD, CLIFTON.

ON HUTCHINSONIANISM.

Leicester, March 4, 1823.

Dear Sir,

I must beg your pardon for not sooner replying to your favour, in which you condescend to inquire my opinion on the subject of Hutchinsonianism. The reason of my delay was my conscious inability to give an opinion entitled to any degree of weight. I have been in the habit of considering Hutchinsonianism as a tissue of fancies, unsupported by reason or scripture; and all that has occurred to me to read on that system, has confirmed that impression. I have attentively perused Parkhurst's Dissertation on the Cherubic Figures in the Temple: it appears to me a most confused and unsatisfactory disquisition; nor is he able to answer, in any tolerable degree, the objection arising from their being represented in the attitude of worshippers. He attempts to get over this by observing, that though the divine persons whom they represent could not without absurdity be represented in the character of worshippers, their symbols might: but this is to me utterly unintelligible. He is evidently much embarrassed with the *four* faces; a most unlikely symbol of a Trinity. I am equally dissatisfied with his notion of the three elements of air, light, and fire, being intended as natural types and symbols of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For this there appears to me not a shadow of proof. The me-

taphors of Scripture afford none whatever; as is evident from this one consideration, that the figurative language of scripture is interpreted as naturally and as easily, without the aid of the Hutchinsonian hypothesis, as with it. What is that sort of typical instruction which never instructed? And where is the people to be found, where the individual, who learned the doctrine of the Trinity from the works of nature? I cannot suppose it would ever have suggested itself to a single mind, had it not been communicated, probably among the earliest revelations of God.

My utter despair of deriving any solid benefit from these speculations, must plead my excuse for not occupying my attention in any attempt to investigate the merits of the system more closely; and I am truly concerned to hear that Mr. B. designs to write upon the subject. I am afraid it will have no other effect than to strengthen existing prejudices against evangelical doctrine.

I am, dear Sir, with much esteem,
Yours most respectfully,
ROBERT HALL.

LXIX.

TO THE REV. ———

IN REPLY TO A REQUEST TO WRITE A REVIEW.

Leicester, Nov. 16, 1823.

My dear Friend,

You have put me on a most irksome task; and were the request to come from almost any other quarter, I should refuse to comply, without a moment's hesitation. I find it difficult to deny you any thing; but, really, you could scarcely have proposed any thing to me more disagreeable. I think very highly of your son's publication; so that my objections arise, in no degree, from that quarter. But, in the first place, I am far from being satisfied of the propriety of suffering the sentiments of private friendship to prevail in a review. A reviewer professes to be a literary judge; and his sentence ought to be as unbiassed as that of any magistrate whatever. But what should we think of a judge, who permitted himself to be tampered with by either party concerned, with a view to procure a favourable decision? In the exercise of his censorial office, a reviewer ought to have neither friends nor enemies. It is an adherence to this maxim which can alone secure the dignified impartiality of criticism, or entitle it to the smallest degree of credit. A work like your son's does not need artificial support; and one of an opposite description does not deserve it. Your son should rest calmly on his own merits, with a becoming confidence that an enlightened public will not fail to do him justice. There was never a period in my life when I would have stooped to solicit a review. I speak on the supposition of the application originating with him.

In the next place, when it is known I have complied in this instance, I shall be harassed with innumerable applications. ———, in particular, will have the justest reason to complain: for he has, at different times, most vehemently importuned me to review particular works, which I have steadily refused; and the only method I have found, to shield myself from his importunities, has been to renounce reviewing altogether. I think it probable he would not admit my review; I am sure he ought not, for the reasons I have assigned, and I have laid him under no such obligation as to induce him to depart from the straight-forward path. I do not suppose I could bring myself to speak higher of the work than an impartial reader would do; and what advantage, then, could be derived from my reviewing it? But supposing I did, where would be the justice to the public? You perceive, my dear friend, the difficulties which surround me, and the reasons why, in my humble opinion, the interference of friendship should not be allowed in such cases.

I write altogether in the dark. You have not informed me in what Review you would wish me to write;

nor do I know whether it has been reviewed already. I am not at all in the habit of reading either the Eclectic, or any other Review: indeed, I wish the whole tribe could be put an end to.

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LXX.

TO MR. J. E. RYLAND. (EXTRACT.)

Leicester, 1824.

——— I cannot write but upon some specified subject; and that subject must be something which suggests itself spontaneously to my thoughts. I feel an insuperable repugnance to the bending of my mind to the suggestion of others; it must be free as air, or I cannot move to any purpose: whatever I write must *originate* entirely with myself. Though I have no objection to gaining money, yet my love of it is not sufficiently strong for it to have any sensible influence in directing my literary exertions. There are several subjects which I have revolved in my mind, to which I feel a decided preference; and if I present myself to the public at all, it must be in the discussion of these. As to Pascal, few admire him more than myself: but, in writing an introduction, I should feel myself quite out at sea; I should float, without any determinate direction; my mind would have no determinate object; and, not having a distinct idea of what I wished to do, I should do nothing to any purpose. For elegant and specious declamation, I have no sort of talent. I must have a brief; I must have something like a fixed thesis, some proposition I wish to establish or illustrate, or I feel perfectly cold and indifferent. For my part, I let every man pursue his own plans: how it is that I am doomed to be the perpetual object of advice, admonition, expostulation, &c. &c., as a writer, I know not. I am sure it does not arise from any proofs I have given of superior docility. I know myself so well,

as to be aware that importunities of this kind have always the effect of indisposing me to their object. I should have written *more* had I been urged *less;* and when the public cease to dictate to me, I shall feel myself my own master.

LXXI.

TO MRS. LANGDON,

ON THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND.

Leicester, Oct. 23, 1824.

My dear Madam,

The melancholy intelligence of the death of dear Mr. Langdon has deeply affected me: and most happy should I deem myself were it in my power to administer effectual consolation under such a stroke. I refrained from addressing you immediately, waiting for the first transports of grief to subside; because I well know, that premature attempts to console only irritate the sorrows they are meant to heal. Let me indulge the hope, that by this time reason and religion are come to your aid, and that you are prepared to say with the greatest and most illustrious of sufferers, "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

The remarkable combination of the most lovely qualities with the most fervent piety, which distinguished the character of our dear friend, while they enhance the sense of your loss, will, I hope, mitigate its bitterness in another view, by assuring you, that "great is his reward in heaven." Death to him is, undoubtedly, "exceeding great gain;" nor would you, in your best moments, wish to draw him down from his elevated abode, to this vale of sorrow and affliction. The stroke was not entirely sudden and unexpected: a long series of attacks and infirmities must, no doubt, have contributed to familiarize your mind to the event. Remember, my dear Madam, that the separation is but for a season; our dear friend is not lost, but preferred to an infinitely higher state,

where he is awaiting your arrival. To me, his removal will long be a source of deep regret; for where shall I find a friend equally amiable, tender, and constant? *

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I beg to be most affectionately remembered to each of your dear children, earnestly praying that their father's God may be their God. Wishing and praying that you may be favoured with the richest consolations of religion,

I remain, my dearest Madam,
Your affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

LXXII.

TO J. B. WILLIAMS, ESQ., SHREWSBURY.

Leicester, March 29, 1825.

Dear Sir,

Some apology is necessary for not having sooner acknowledged your very kind present of your new and highly-improved edition of the admirable Philip Henry, whom you have the honour, I find, of enumerating among your ancestors. It is a descent with which you have more reason to be satisfied, than if you could trace your pedigree from the Plantagenets. I waited only until I had time to renew my acquaintance with the Life of that amiable man, and to form an estimate of the improvements it has derived from diligent researches. I have not yet entirely completed the volume; but I am now busy in doing so, and have read enough to satisfy myself of the great obligations you have conferred on the public, by this excellent work. The additional documents and letters, by which you have enriched and enlarged the original narrative, constitute a treasure of wisdom and piety, for which you are entitled to the warm

* Mr. Langdon and Mr. Hall had been fellow-students at B istol; and ever after cherished for each other the warmest esteem and affection.—ED.

acknowledgements of every christian reader, and especially of every dissenter. May a double portion of his spirit descend on the rising generation of ministers!

The labour and research requisite for furnishing such a repast, must have been great; but not more so, I dare say, than the pleasure you derived from the consciousness of conferring so important a benefit on the public. Permit me to thank you, most sincerely, for the favour you have done me, by the bestowment of so valuable a present. It were highly desirable, that more such biographies of the illustrious dead, improved and enlarged as this, might be given to the public; if it had no other fruit, than to withdraw their attention a little from that farrago of periodical trifles by which the public mind is dissipated, and its taste corrupted.

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I remain, dear Sir,
Your highly obliged Friend and Servant,
ROBERT HALL.

LXXIII.

TO MR. J. E. RYLAND.

Leicester, May 21, 1825.

My dear Sir,

I am extremely concerned to hear the melancholy account your letter contains, of the situation of your dear and honoured father, at the same time that I feel grateful to you for the communication. I had heard previously that he was supposed to be in a declining state; but, little imagining he was so ill, your letter gave me a violent shock. With God all things are possible; and who can tell but the Lord may yet raise him up, and assign him more work to do before he is taken to his eternal reward? It is my earnest wish and prayer, that such may be the result. His loss will be most deeply felt, not only by his afflicted family, but by a very numerous circle of friends, and by the church of God at large. For himself, all is and will be well; nothing can possibly befall

him, but what will be highly to his advantage. A man of a more eminently holy and devoted spirit than that of your dear father, it has never been my lot to witness, and very, very few, who made any approach to him. I feel in the prospect of his removal, much for the family, the academy, and the church. You, my dear Sir, together with your very excellent mother and sisters, will be the objects of a deep and extensive sympathy: but God, whose ways, though mysterious, are always gracious and merciful towards them that fear him, will, I doubt not, sustain and support you under this afflicting stroke, and cause it afterward to work the peaceable fruits of righteousness. His prayers will draw down innumerable blessings on those who were nearest and dearest to him; for who can doubt that the prayers of such a man must avail much? The impression of his example, and the memory of his virtues, will suggest a most powerful motive to constancy, patience, and perseverance, in the ways of God. You will never cease to bless God for having bestowed upon you such a parent. His humility, his meekness, tenderness, devotedness to God, and zeal for the interests of truth and holiness, will long endear him to the christian world, and make his name like the odour of precious ointment. What, in the event of your dear father's removal, will become of the academy and the church? I tremble to think of the consequences: never, surely, could he have been spared with more serious injury to the most important interests! May the eyes of all of us be [turned] to God for his direction and blessing! I should have written to your dear father himself, but feared it might agitate and disturb him. I beg you to remember me to him in the most earnest, respectful, and affectionate terms, and assure him of a deep interest in my feeble prayers. I beg, also, to be most affectionately remembered to your dear mother, sisters, and every part of the family. That the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, may take your dear father under the cover of his wings,—and should he walk through the valley and shadow of death, afford him his rod and his staff,—and that this most affecting

visitation may be sanctified for the eternal benefit of all the parties concerned,—is, my dear Sir, the earnest prayer of

Your most affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL

LXXIV.

TO MR. J. E. RYLAND. (EXTRACT.)

Leicester, May 29, 1825.

——— It gives me much pleasure, but no surprise, to hear that the end of your dear father was emphatically peace. What else, or what less, could be expected from such a life? As he was one of the brightest examples of holiness on earth, no doubt great is his reward in heaven. May it be your happiness, my dear Sir, and mine, to follow, though at a humble distance, so bright a pattern. May we not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. I need not repeat how much I feel for your dear mother, and the whole bereaved family. It is, indeed, an irreparable loss; but such is the tenure of all earthly bliss. May we be enabled to lay hold on eternal life.

LXXV.

TO MRS. RYLAND.

ON THE DEATH OF DR. RYLAND.

——— Permit me, my dear Madam, to express the deep sympathy I, in common with innumerable others, feel for you under your irreparable loss. The magnitude of it none can adequately estimate but yourself: but it is consoling to reflect, that you are not called to sorrow as those that have no hope; that, on the contrary, our loss is his unspeakable gain. And the time is short: a very few years will put an end to all our sorrows; and, if we are the Lord's, will reunite us to all those whom we have most loved upon earth.

As you have been highly distinguished by the blessing of possessing such a companion for life, so it is no inconsiderable honour to have contributed so essentially and so long to the felicity of the best of men. All who know you will ever respect you, not only as the relict of Dr. Ryland, but as the distinguished individual who entitled herself to his gratitude by such a series of unremitting attentions and kind offices (the remembrance of which must be a source of melancholy pleasure) as will doubtless draw down a blessing from Him to whom he was dear. It is my earnest prayer, that the God who reveals himself as the father of the fatherless, and the husband of the widow, may take you under his especial protection, and supply you with those rich and ineffable consolations which are neither few nor small. We have the word of Him that cannot lie, to assure us that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God." That you may feel more of his sustaining hand, and of his blissful presence, is, dear Madam, the earnest prayer of

Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

LXXVI.

TO MR. ARTHUR TOZER,* BRISTOL.

IN REFERENCE TO MR. HALL'S REMOVAL TO BROADMEAD.

Leicester, July 19, 1825.

My dear Friend,

I am very sorry your kind letters have remained unanswered so long: it was the consequence of their arriving while I was absent from home. I did not arrive at Leicester till last Saturday, having stayed at Kettering, in order to preach for the mission, which I did morning and evening.

The letters from you ought, in all reason, to have been sent forward; but this was impracticable, because my

* Mr. Tozer was one of the deacons of the church at Broadmead.

whole family were, at the same time, on an excursion for their health. I hope you will be so good as to accept this as a sufficient apology for my apparent neglect. Had I been guilty of any voluntary one, towards a friend whom I so highly esteem, I should never forgive myself.

It is impossible for me to hear the favourable opinion which you and the rest of my friends entertain of me, without being deeply sensible of their kindness. I feel myself most unworthy of such an expression of their regard; the consciousness of which, while it enhances my gratitude, impairs my pleasure. Could I see my way clear to leave Leicester, I should still tremble at the thought of being placed in a situation in which I must necessarily sustain a comparison with your late beloved and lamented pastor.

In an affair of so much magnitude, I should wish to avoid whatever might wear the appearance of precipitance; and, on that account, should the church at Broadmead see fit to give me an invitation to the pastoral office, I should wish to be allowed some time, before I give a decisive answer. On some very obvious accounts, I should prefer Bristol, perhaps, to any other situation; and the state of the church at Leicester is far from being precisely as I could wish. Still the aspect of things is brightening; the clouds, I trust, are beginning to disperse; and an important step has already been taken towards the restoration of mutual confidence and affection. I feel at present inclined to believe it is my duty to stay at Leicester. I wish most earnestly to be directed from above, and that the few remaining years of my life (if any are allotted me) may be passed where they may best subserve the best of causes. I am not at all given to change: I have long fixed it in my mind that it was the design of heaven that I shall finish my days here; and, had nothing occurred to disturb our tranquillity, I should not have indulged a thought to the contrary. I do most earnestly bespeak an interest in your prayers, that my way may be directed of the Lord; and that "for me to live may be Christ and to die gain."

Pecuniary considerations, as you suspect, will have

little influence in guiding my determination. I beg to be most affectionately remembered to all inquiring friends, and remain, dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Leicester, August 11, 1825.

My very dear Friend,

I should have sooner written to you, but on two accounts: first, the almost ceaseless interruptions I have met with since my return from London, which have kept me in a perpetual hurry; and, second, my inability, even at present, to give you the satisfaction you wish by a decisive answer. Sensible, as I deeply am, of the unmerited tokens of respect shown me by my Bristol friends, and solicitous, if possible, to comply with all their wishes, I still feel difficulties in the way, which I know not how to surmount. The church at Leicester is much agitated on the occasion, and have evinced great unanimity in their resolution to adopt the speediest and most effectual measures, in order to remove the principal source of my uneasiness. There appears to be but one feeling pervading the church and congregation. What success may attend their efforts to restore peace, God only knows; but, should they be successful, I shall find it very difficult to separate myself from them. To inflict the pain it would occasion to many excellent persons and kind friends, would cost me a conflict for which I feel myself little prepared. In truth, the motives for staying in my present situation, and the motives for relinquishing it, are so equally balanced, that I am kept still in a state of suspense; and am habitually under some apprehension, that, whatever choice I make, I shall be apt to repent not having made an opposite one. It is certainly a humbling consideration not to be able to come to a speedier decision; but I feel the weight of the affair, and that the consequences of it, both to myself and others, will probably be greater than can result from any future step in my life. I earnestly implore an interest in your prayers, that the Lord would be pleased to direct me, and that, wherever the bounds of my habitation may be fixed, "Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by my life or my death." The greatest annoyance of my life, for some years past, has arisen from not being able to command my time, particularly in the morning; and could I be assured of my possessing this inestimable privilege, the poorest and most neglected village would possess irresistible charms for me. The afternoon and evening I have always been willing to abandon to the use of others; but to have no time I can call my own,—to be liable to have the most precious hours of reading and meditation snatched from me,—is an evil, to one of my temperament, almost insupportable. Now, I greatly fear this evil would be increased at Bristol. One advantage I should enjoy at Bristol (the want of which I severely feel here) is, access to books; but what will this avail me, if I have no time to read them?

I have carefully inspected the documents relating to Terril's deeds, brought by Messrs. Sherring and Phillips. It is my decided opinion, that the pastor of Broadmead is under no obligation to prepare young men for the ministry, unless they are *presented* to him for that purpose; a thing most unlikely to happen, when such ample means of education are already provided. Should it occur, however, he has only to make his election, either to comply with the demand, or to relinquish his interest in the establishment. As to the fear of incurring penalties, it is too ridiculous to be thought of. All this, however, I most cheerfully leave to the determination of the trustees; for if ever I was sincere in any thing, it is when I declare, that pecuniary considerations will have no influence in my decision. To *deteriorate* my situation would be injustice to my family: beyond that, I have no solicitude. I beg to be most affectionately remembered

to Mr. James and my sisters, and all friends, as if named. I remain, dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Leicester, Oct. 3, 1825.

My very dear Friend,

I am as much ashamed as any of my friends can be, to keep them so long in suspense respecting my determination in regard to removing to Bristol. I feel it to be of so much importance to my own happiness, and in the relation it bears to the spiritual interests of a large body of people, both here and at Bristol, that I tremble at the thought of coming to a final decision. My inclination, I confess, stands towards Bristol. The reasons are obvious: two sisters, justly dear to me, residing there; a place dear to me from ancient recollections, and from the most enchanting scenery; access to books, a want which I most grievously feel here; many old friends, or the families of old friends, whom I much love and esteem; a superior description of society; and, I may add, equal, if not superior, prospects of usefulness. These, it must be acknowledged, are weighty considerations, and I feel them in their full force, insomuch that I feel myself incapable of relinquishing the thought of Bristol without a pang. On the other hand, I most sensibly feel the difficulty of leaving a people who are most affectionately attached, and a congregation which I have, through mercy, been the instrument of raising from a very low to a very flourishing state. The certainty of giving great uneasiness to many excellent and worthy friends, and of being accessary to the injury of an interest which ought ever to be dear to me, presses much upon my mind; it is, indeed, the grand difficulty I feel in the way of leaving Leicester. I tremble at the thought of destroying what I have been the means of building up.

I tremble at the thought of rushing into a sphere of action, to which I am not called, and, it may be, of offending God by deserting my proper post. As it is the *last* remove, in all probability, I shall ever be tempted to make before I am conveyed to the "house appointed for all living," I feel extremely anxious that it may be made with the divine approbation, conscious that my times are in the Lord's hands. I desire most sincerely to acknowledge him in all my ways. O that I might hear a voice behind me, saying, "This is the way, walk thou in it!" My mind is much perplexed, my resolution not decided. I feel a conflict between opposite motives, and am drawn by contrary attractions; though, were I to consult my inclinations alone, I should certainly decide for Bristol: my advanced period of life, and the apprehension of its possible, if not probable effects on the interests of religion, form the grand objections. One thing I must beg leave to mention, that, were I to settle with you, I should decline taking any share in the monthly lecture. In the united prayer-meeting I should engage with pleasure. I have but little opinion of the utility of the first of those meetings.

On the whole, I must request *one* month more, and at the end of that time (if my life is spared), you may reckon upon my giving you a decisive answer. During that interval I will again seek divine guidance, and I humbly hope I shall receive it. At all events, I will not keep you longer in suspense, and am truly concerned at having exercised your patience so long.

I beg to be most affectionately remembered to Mr. Holden, and thank him sincerely for his kind letter. My best regards await all inquiring friends. My love to dear Mr. and Mrs. James, and my sister.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

Leicester, Dec. 6, 1825.

My dear Friend,

I have just time at present to inform you, that I have come to a determination to accept the invitation the church and congregation of Broadmead have thought fit to give me, on the following terms: that I make trial of the situation for *one year*, and that at the termination of it, if it should not answer our mutual purposes, each party, *i. e.* the church and myself, shall be at liberty to separate. I do not say this from the smallest desire that the union may not be permanent; I earnestly hope and pray that it may; but futurities are in the hand of God; and if the change of situation should be found materially to affect my health, which at my stage of existence is equivalent to life,—or if the ends we propose are not answered,—I may be at liberty, after a fair trial, to dissolve the connexion, without incurring the charge of levity or inconstancy. If I shall be spared to come, it will be with the hope and intention of living and dying among you, nor shall I cherish any expectation of change; but imperious reasons, connected with my happiness and usefulness, may arise to determine me to the contrary, of which I shall probably be able by that time to form a judgement.

I write this in haste, as I expect Mr. Daniell every moment, who is setting out at two o'clock. I shall address a letter to the church in a few days; I purpose to direct it to you; when you will be so good as to forward it, or read it to the church. I have only one thing to request, and that is of great importance; that you will grant me an interest in your prayers, that my way may be prospered, that I may be kept from falling, and that my removal to Bristol may be instrumental to the conversion of sinners, and to the building up the church in faith and holiness. Let me beg you, my dear and honoured friend, not to forget me at a throne of grace. My assurance of this on your part, and on the part of my friends in general, would add unspeakably to the comfort of,

My dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

P. S. I beg my love to Mr. and Mrs. James, and sister Mary. Kind remembrances to all friends.

LXXX.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ASSEMBLING IN BROADMEAD, BRISTOL.

ON ACCEPTING THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

Leicester, Dec. 21, 1825.

My dear Brethren,

After long and mature deliberation and earnest prayer, I write these lines to inform you that I accept the invitation you have been pleased to give me to the pastoral office. That it may become a mutual blessing, and that you and myself may reap the fruit of it, in the glory of God, the spiritual improvement of each other, and the conversion of sinners from the error of their way, will I trust continue to be, as it has already been, the object of your frequent and fervent supplication to the throne of grace. Be assured I feel deeply my utter inability for the adequate discharge of the weighty duties which devolve upon me, and particularly my unfitness to walk in the steps of your late venerable pastor. My only hope, amidst the discouragement arising from this quarter, is placed in "your prayers, and the supply of the spirit of Christ Jesus." Conscious as I am of innumerable imperfections, I must rely on your candour for a favourable construction of my conduct, and reception of my labours. Permit me, my dear brethren, to conclude, by "recommending you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified by the faith of Jesus."

I remain, dear Brethren,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ROBERT HALL.

LXXXI.

TO THE REV. P. J. SAFFERY, OF SALISBURY.

Leicester, Jan. 16, 1826.

Dear Sir,

I duly received your favour, and cannot be insensible to the honour you have done me, in wishing me to assist at your approaching ordination by delivering a charge. I am sorry you appear to lay so much stress upon it, because it makes me the more uneasy in putting that negative on your wishes which my judgement and my inclination dictate. As I intend to avoid engagements out of Bristol as much as possible, and very rarely, if ever, to officiate at ordinations, I can by no means consent to begin my career there by an engagement of that nature, which would at once, by giving erroneous expectations, be productive of much inconvenience. Nearly all the spare time I can command from my proper station will necessarily be occupied in visiting the connexions among which I have lived, and where I have numerous old and tried friends, who must be ever dear to my heart. As to ordinations, it has long been my opinion that they are best conducted by the presbyters or elders of the immediate vicinity of the party; and that to step beyond that circle is to sacrifice or impair the chief benefit of that practice, which is the putting a wholesome check on the abuse of the popular suffrage, by making it impossible for a minister to establish himself at the head of a congregation, without the approbation and sanction of the circle of pastors with whom he is to act. It is an affair in which the church are chiefly or solely concerned; and though the calling in a stranger on such occasions may attract a greater audience, it is, in my humble opinion, at the expense of more important objects. For these, and other reasons that might be adduced, you must allow me *firmly*, though most respectfully, to decline the service you have been pleased to assign me; and, to cut off any occasion of [discussion], I must request the favour of [your] accepting this reply as *final*.

I cannot close these lines, however, without expressing the pleasure it affords me to find you are likely to succeed your excellent father. That a double portion of his spirit may rest upon you, is, dear Sir, the sincere desire and prayer of

Your sincere Friend and humble Servant,
ROBERT HALL.

P. S. I beg to be respectfully remembered to your excellent mother, though personally unknown.

LXXXII.

TO THE REV. DR. J. P. SMITH, HOMERTON.

Bristol, Nov. 3, 1826.

Rev. and dear Sir,

I have to complain of a good deal of misrepresentation in what is stated in your letter, as having passed in my interview with Dr. Malan. The conversations (for they were two) passed at my house, not at Clifton. He was insisting much on the absolute necessity of the full assurance of our personal salvation, which, as he appeared to carry it to a great extent, led me to remark, that it seemed to me a most desirable attainment, and what every sincere christian ought to seek after with diligence, rather than as essential to the very [existence] of religion; and in the course of conversation I confessed that I had it not myself. At this he expressed his surprise, and began with emphasis to recite that passage in John's epistle, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." His discourse to me on this subject was not satisfactory. Part of it was not very intelligible; and part, as far as I did understand it, was injudicious, and bordering on enthusiasm. I certainly was extremely struck with the indications of exalted piety and love exhibited by his whole deportment, and particularly his countenance. I must confess there was something in his looks that reminded me more of the ideal picture I have formed of the Saviour, than I ever saw before in

any human being; and, as I am too prone to express myself in the style of hyperbole, it is to that part of his character that the expression your letter quoted must be understood to allude. Though I am certain I never used some of the words imputed to me, particularly those in which I am represented as saying, "All other men were brutes and beasts compared to him." I am equally a stranger to the words and the ideas, you may depend on it. I never acknowledged the little success of my sermons arose from my ministry not being accompanied with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He observed, that my printed discourses (of these only he spoke) wanted simplicity: nor was I at all concerned or surprised at that; for he found much fault with Maclaurin's, on "Glorying in the Cross of Christ," which he accused of the same defect, observing, that it exhibited the truth, but did not exhibit his Master; a remark which appeared to me (as I observed to him) very unintelligible. I never gave thanks aloud, that Dr. Malan was brought to Bristol; nothing of the kind ever passed from me. I probably did (indeed, I know I did,) express myself much gratified in having an opportunity of a personal interview; and I parted from him with much esteem and affection on my part. I thought him, on the whole, a very extraordinary man; though much more to be admired for his ardent piety and lively imagination, than for judgement or profundity. Even on his favourite topic of assurance he seemed sometimes to retract all that he had asserted. I did not hear him [preach]; but I learnt afterwards, that his hearers generally went away with the impression of their having heard very new doctrine. If Dr. Malan has given the statement you have copied, I am heartily sorry for it, because it is *extremely* inaccurate, and must necessarily diminish the high regard in which I held him. Thus I have given you, my dear Sir, a brief outline of what passed; and most earnestly wish you every degree of success in your labours to maintain the truth as it is in Jesus.

I am, dear and Rev. Sir,

With very high esteem, your affectionate Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

N. B.—Permit me to return my most sincere thanks for your admirable defence of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, against Belsham: it will benefit the church, I trust, as long as the English language lasts.

LXXXIII.

TO W. B. GURNEY, ESQ.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. GURNEY.

Bristol, August 25, 1827

My dear Friend,

It is a very few days since I heard the very melancholy intelligence of the removal of dear Mrs. Gurney; and I was not willing to obtrude on the sacred privacy of grief till its first agitation was in some measure subsided. Most *deeply* is this stroke felt, and long will continue to be so, by that very large circle of which she was the ornament and delight; but how much more severe the stroke on him who was united to her by the tenderest of earthly ties! To me the information was like a thunderclap: it was so sudden and so unexpected, that I could scarcely persuade myself it was a reality; it seems now like one of those frightful visions of the night which vanish at the return of dawn.

Alas! how fresh in my mind is the figure of the dear deceased, presiding in the social circle with that inimitable ease, elegance, and grace, which captivated every heart:—changed now, and clouded for ever with the shades of death! Never was a victim snatched by the great destroyer, more belóved, or more lamented.

But why should I dwell on what is so distressing to remember, rather than advert to the brighter side of this melancholy picture? You, my dear friend, have lost the richest of earthly blessings in a most admirable and amiable wife; but grace has completed its triumph in adding to the celestial choir one more spirit of "the just made perfect." Bright as she shone in her earthly sphere, her light was dim and obscure, compared to that which

now invests her. Her pure and celestial spirit has ascended to its native seat, where she "bears the name of her God on her forehead, and serves him day and night in his temple." Your loss, my dear friend, is her unspeakable gain; and your mind is too generous, in your calmest moments, to wish her hurled from her celestial elevation. Let a few more months and years revolve, and you will be reunited, to part no more; the days of your mourning will be ended; the Lord will be to you (as he is already to the dear deceased) "your everlasting light, and your God your glory."

I hope you will not suffer the excess of grief so to absorb your mind as to shut out the consolations of piety, or the claims of duty. It is my earnest prayer that God himself may comfort you, and that he may be pleased so to sanctify this most heavy trial, that, though "faint," you may be "still pursuing;" and that, though you "sow in tears," you may "reap in joy."

I beg to be most affectionately remembered to every branch of your family, as well as to all inquiring friends; and remain, with deep concern,

Your affectionate and sympathizing Friend,

ROBERT HALL.

LXXXIV.

TO EBENEZER FOSTER, ESQ.

Bristol, Jan. 29, 1829.

My dear Sir,

I safely received your favour of the 20th instant. It gives me great pleasure to infer, from your letter, that the health of your family, and particularly of your elder brother, is in a tolerable state.

The death of Mrs. —— must have been felt very severely by your excellent consort, to whom I beg to express a deep and sincere sympathy. I was greatly affected when I heard of it, and shall ever carry with me a grateful and affectionate sense of the uniform kindness with which she treated me, as well as of the many amiable

and interesting traits of her character. It would have given me pleasure to have been informed what were her views and feelings in the prospect of eternity: I hope she exhibited that state of mind, on the approach of that awful crisis, which must prevent surviving friends from "sorrowing as those who have no hope." I have lately heard, with much concern, of the alarming illness of my dear friend [Nutter?];—but have rejoiced to learn subsequently, that considerable hopes are entertained of his recovery. While events of this nature present a striking commentary on the solemn declaration that "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field," it is consoling to remember that "the word of the Lord endureth for ever;" and that, by the preaching of the gospel, it is more extensively promulgated than ever.

The intelligence you have just given me of the rapid extension of evangelical religion in Cambridge, is highly gratifying; nor can I entertain any serious apprehension of ultimate injury resulting from thence to the dissenting interest. If something like competition should have the effect of giving increased momentum to the exertions of both parties, the public may be benefitted, and both improved.

With respect to my health, I can say little that I could wish to say. Some small abatement of the violence and frequency of my old complaint has, I think, of late, been experienced: but it is very inconsiderable; and the last night it prevented me getting a wink of sleep until after seven o'clock this morning. On this account, I can speak with no sort of confidence of my intended visit to Cambridge, further than this, that I feel a most *anxious* desire of enjoying it, and that nothing but absolute necessity will prevent me from making the attempt; and, as travelling on the outside is much the easiest to me, it will not be prudent to undertake it till the summer is tolerably advanced. I have little intelligence to communicate worthy of your attention. I continue to be very happy with my people, from whom I daily receive every demonstration of affection and respect. Our attendance is as good as I could wish; and we have added to the *Baptist*

Church,* during the last year, twenty-seven, and six are standing candidates for baptism. For these tokens of divine presence I desire to be thankful. Mrs. Hall and my family are, through mercy, as well as usual; and join with me in most affectionate regards to every branch of your family, and to the Cambridge circle of friends in general. I beg to be most affectionately remembered to dear Mr. ——, and to assure him of my deep sympathy with him under his heavy and irreparable loss. It is my fervent and sincere prayer it may be sanctified.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your obliged and affectionate Friend,
ROBERT HALL.

LXXXV.

TO JAMES NUTTER, ESQ., SHELFORD, NEAR CAMBRIDGE.

Bristol, Feb. 16, 1829.

My very dear Friend,

I heard with much concern of your late alarming illness, and, with a proportionate degree of joy, of your partial recovery, and of the pleasing prospect presented of your yet surviving for years, to be a blessing to your family and connexions. It grieves me much to learn from Mr. Price, that you have experienced something like a relapse, and that your situation is considered still critical and precarious. However the Lord may dispose of you, (though it is my earnest prayer that your days may be prolonged to a distant period,) I cannot adequately express my satisfaction at finding you are favoured with such an experience of the consolations of religion, as to enable you to comfort your sorrowing friends, and to bear so glorious a testimony to the power and grace of the

* To render this phrase intelligible to some readers, it may be proper to observe, that in the congregation at Broadmead there are two classes of persons who are associated in church-fellowship: one consists of those only who have been baptized in adult age, on a confession of faith; while the other consists jointly of such and of pedobaptists. The former are "strict communion baptists," and constitute *the baptist church*: the latter furnish an example of "mixed communion."—ED.

Redeemer. O, my dear friend, how precious is a merciful Saviour in the eyes of a dying sinner! When the heart and flesh fail, he can adopt the triumphant language of Simeon, and say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." You will never, my dear friend, to all eternity, be able sufficiently to magnify the riches of divine grace, in adopting you into the family of the Redeemer, and making you "an heir of glory."

I earnestly hope the spectacle they have witnessed will have a most beneficial effect upon the younger branches of your family, in confirming pious resolutions, and convincing of the emptiness, the nothingness, of all which the world admires, compared to an interest in Christ, and a preparation for heaven. In the prospect of life there are *many* things which are adapted to animate and support; in the near approach of death, there is but "the hope of glory." It is my earnest prayer, that this hope may shed its brightest beams on the mind of my dear and highly esteemed friend. As to myself, my health is in such a state that I can say nothing of the future: but your wishes will be with me so far a law, that, if my complaint will permit me during the early part of the summer, I shall accede to Mr. Price's request, by officiating at the opening of the meeting-house.*

* * * * *

Earnestly praying that every blessing may be communicated to you, which a covenant God has to bestow, I remain,

Your most affectionate Friend and Brother,
ROBERT HALL.†

* Mr. Price married a daughter of Mr. Nutter.

† This letter did not reach Shelford until the day after the death of the excellent individual to whom it was addressed.—ED.

LXXXVI.

TO EBENEZER FOSTER, ESQ., CAMBRIDGE.

Bristol, Feb. 5, 1831

My dear Sir,

I acknowledge not sooner answering yours.

* * * * * *

I have little or no intelligence to communicate, farther than that our city is much agitated by political discussion and the strife of parties. A meeting was lately held of the friends of reform, to petition on its behalf; but it was most stormy and tempestuous. Though all concurred in the general object, violent disputes arose on minor points, which distracted the discussion, and rendered it a scene of tumult and uproar. Such, of late, has been the general character of public meetings at Bristol. For my part, I never attend them. Indeed, the complaint in my back renders it impossible for me to stand; and to lie down would neither be decent nor practicable.

Conversation is almost entirely occupied by the all-absorbing theme of politics; nor is it to be wondered at, when we consider the equivocal and anomalous state of this and of almost all other countries. Some great crisis appears to be approaching, which will probably shake Europe to its centre, and produce some entire new order of things. Shall we ultimately escape a war? I have great confidence in the pacific views of our present ministry, but less in their continuing in power; nor do I perceive what measures they can adopt, that will materially alleviate the distress of the lower orders; and, unless this can be done, a [great convulsion] is, I fear, inevitable. At all events, one great source of consolation remains: "the Lord reigneth; and blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

By the way, it gives me pleasure to find that attempts are making in London to dissolve the union between the orthodox and the socinian [dissenters.] I most heartily wish them success.* It is a most unnatural and preposterous union, and tends, above any thing else, to give an imposing air of importance to the socinian [party], which, but for this coalition, would sink into insignificance. It is odious in the eyes of pious churchmen, and tends to throw a disguise over the real state of the dissenters, in relation to their religious tenets. But I must close, and am afraid I have already occupied too much of your valuable time.

Mrs. Hall and my family are in tolerable health, and desire to unite with me in most affectionate regards to you and your family, and to your dear brother and his family, Mr. —— and his lady, &c. &c. I would just add, that I [derived] considerable benefit, in relation to the determination of blood to the lungs, [from] my visit to Cheltenham.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your most affectionate and obliged Friend,

ROBERT HALL.*

* Mr. Hall here alludes to the union of what are called the "three denominations" of dissenters. This union (which, however, is never pretended to be religious) commenced at a time when the Presbyterians, most of whom are now Arians, or Socinians, were almost universally Calvinists. Some persons have supposed, on account of Mr. Hall's strong language in this case, that he would have joined those who wish to exclude all but the orthodox from the British and Foreign Bible Society, and have aimed to introduce an extra-scriptural phrase as a bond of union in a benevolent institution. But they who have thus fancied, neither duly meditate upon the essential difference of the two cases, nor upon Mr. Hall's principles of action with regard to the Bible Society, so forcibly depicted in his speech delivered at the second Anniversary Meeting of the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society. See Vol. IV. —ED.

* This letter was written only four days before Mr. Hall's last illness, and sixteen before his death.—ED.

ON THE EXCELLENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Western Association.

[Written in 1787.]

THE EXCELLENCY

OF

THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Dear Brethren,

We are happy to be able to address you on the present occasion. We have many and great thanks to render to our common God and Father, for preserving us through another year, and permitting us once more to assemble ourselves together. We have too often experienced your candour and good will to doubt of your bearing with us, whilst we exhort you with all earnestness and sincerity.

You will remember, brethren, the dignity of the dispensation under which you live; that it is not the institution of man, but the wise and gracious plan of God to make you happy. With this view he raised up the people of the Jews, kept them distinct from all others, and gave them such a portion of knowledge as might, in due time, prepare for the display of the gospel. With this view, a succession of priests was kept up, the eye of prophecy was enlightened, and the hand of Omnipotence stretched forth. After thus preparing the way, our great Redeemer himself appeared upon the earth, lived in humiliation and sorrow, and died in agony and disgrace. During the time of his personal ministry, he had every attestation of Deity in his favour, and the power of God was often exerted in a most signal manner. After his ascension, a larger measure of knowledge and power was given to his disciples than had been afforded them before. They asserted his character, and affirmed that he had

risen from the dead, in the very place in which he had been crucified. They were endued with a miraculous skill in tongues, for the very purpose of spreading the gospel through the different parts of the world; and with what success they did it, and how, in the face of danger and of death, they maintained their cause, whilst many of them perished in their sufferings, is well known, and will draw tears of admiration and gratitude from all succeeding ages.

When we see the Saviour descending from heaven as a witness for God, and behold his sufferings and death, we cannot help being astonished at so stupendous a scene, and inquiring into the purpose it was intended to accomplish. One, among many other great ends which are answered by it, is the removing the ignorance and error in which we are by nature involved, and giving us the knowledge of God, and our true happiness. If there be a moral Governor of the world, it must be of great importance to know upon what terms we stand with him, and what expectations we may form from him. A sober, reflecting man could scarcely feel himself at ease, till he attained to some certainty in points of so much consequence; and yet how little information we can derive from reason in inquiries of this nature, may be seen from the experience of past ages, and those the most enlightened and refined; which, after all their researches, have not been able to come to any agreement, or to gain any satisfaction. We may discover, by the light of nature, the existence of a being who is possessed of all possible perfection. The works of God sufficiently display his goodness, wisdom, and power; but with respect to the application of these, in any particular instance, it leaves us entirely at a loss. We have no measure which we can apply to the operations of an infinite mind; and, therefore, though we may be assured that the Divine Being possesses all the attributes which compose supreme excellence, it is impossible for us to say, in particular instances, what path of conduct may best consist with those perfections, in their most extensive operation. Indeed, to discover not only the leading attributes of the

Divine Nature, but to be acquainted beforehand with every direction they will take, would be fully to comprehend the Most High. When, therefore, without the aid of revelation, we attempt to foretell the dispensations of the Almighty, we are lost in a maze, and are obliged to rest in vague and uncertain conjectures. This holds true, more especially, when applied to the conduct of Providence with respect to only a small part of creation. In this case our uncertainty is doubled, since we know that all the works of God form one vast system, and that the regulation of the parts must be subservient to the administration of the whole. But this situation is ours. Confined to a point in our existence, and limited in our ideas, we cannot tell what relation we bear to other beings, or how it may seem fit to Divine Providence to dispose of us, in relation to those higher and more ultimate designs which are continually carrying on. Our meaning may be illustrated by the following instance:—It is certain that the Divine Being is, in the greatest degree, compassionate and good; but, if a number of creatures render themselves unhappy by a wilful rebellion against him, a singular instance would arise. It would be impossible to say whether the exercise of compassion *here* would best comport with the highest goodness, and the greatest happiness, in the general administration of Providence, because no one could trace every relation which the parts bear to the whole.

This you will perceive is a case entirely to the point; for disorder and sin *have* entered into the world. It is evident, things are turned out of their natural and original channel—that they are not what they *have* been, nor what they *ought* to be. Men have corrupted their way. A change so singular in the creation—a situation so striking, and so little to be apprehended under the government of a holy and perfect Being, naturally leads us to look for a revolution in the dispensations of Providence. In such a state, some new and awful interposition of the Divine hand might well be expected. There is something, at the same time, in the idea of having provoked the displeasure of God, when seriously thought of,

too heavy for the heart of man to bear. We cannot leave his presence, we cannot resist his power, we cannot evade his stroke. Hence mankind, in all ages, have had their fears awakened, and have taken a gloomy survey of an hereafter. They saw death busy around them, carrying their fellow-creatures out of their sight. Anxious and fearful for themselves, they sought for them in the dreams of poetic illusion, and followed them in the gloomy visions of unenlightened fancy. They found that life was filled with vanity and sorrow; they knew not but death would extinguish their existence, or transmit them to still greater misery. They had just light enough dimly to show them the Judge of the universe seated on his throne, in wrath, clouded with darkness, and beset with judgements. They had no certain access to him—no acceptable worship to pay him—no assurance that their prayers would be answered, or their sins forgiven them. They saw not the issue of things, nor could they take any lengthened view of futurity. They knew not, therefore, how to cherish any great hopes, to form any high and extensive plans: they were confined to the present moment, and all beyond it was covered with confusion and horror. You will not, my brethren, think this description overwrought, if you read the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Herein, then, appears the supreme excellence of the christian dispensation. In the midst of this darkness, it rises like the sun in its strength, and all these gloomy shades melt away, and are lost in the brightness of it. It no longer leaves us to the conjectures of reason, which has always erred, nor to the fluctuating opinions of men; but all it declares it confirms by the authority of God. The truths it discovers were proclaimed by the Son of God himself, who lay in the bosom of his Father from eternity, who was acquainted with all his counsels, and created all his works. It raises no hopes within, but what are built upon the promise and oath of Him who cannot lie. In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who was God as well as man, in the humiliation of his life, and in his death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion; whilst, at the same moment, the law of God received more honour than it could have done by the obedience and death of any, or of all his creatures. *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* In this dispensation of his grace, he has reached so far beyond our highest hopes, that, if we love him, we may be assured that he will freely with it give us all things. Access to God is now opened at all times, and from all places; and to such as sincerely ask it, he has promised his Spirit to teach them to pray, and to help their infirmities. The sacrifice of Christ has rendered it just for him to forgive sin; and whenever we are led to repent of, and to forsake it, even the *righteousness* of God is declared in the pardon of it. Dear brethren, consolation pours itself in on every side, whilst we contemplate the gospel, and refreshes our inmost souls. It gives us the prospect of our sins being pardoned—our prayers accepted—our very afflictions turned into blessings—and our existence prolonged to an endless duration. We see christianity indeed, as yet, but in its infancy. It has not already reached the great ends it is intended to answer, and to which it is constantly advancing. At present it is but as *a grain of mustard seed*, and seems to bring forth a tender and weakly crop; but, be assured, it is of God's own right-hand planting, and he will never suffer it to perish. It will soon stretch its branches to the river, and its shade to the ends of the earth. The weary will repose themselves under it; the hungry will partake of its fruits; and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

You, dear brethren, who profess the name of Jesus, will delight in contemplating the increase and grandeur of his kingdom, and your expectations will not deceive you. *He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.* The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age, or of one nation. It is a train of light first put in motion by God, and which will continue to move and to spread, till it has filled the whole earth with its glory. Its blessings will descend, and its influence will

be felt to the latest generations. Uninterrupted in its course, and boundless in its extent, it will not be limited by time or space. The earth is too narrow for the display of its effects, and the accomplishment of its purposes. It points forward to an eternity. The great Redeemer will again appear upon the earth as the Judge and Ruler of it; will send forth his angels, and gather his elect from the four winds; will abolish sin, and death, and hell, and will place the righteous for ever in the presence of his God and their God, of his Father and their Father. If such be our religion, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? You are conscious that a mere belief of the christian revelation will not purify the heart, or regulate the conduct. We may calmly assent to the most interesting and solemn truths of christianity, and afterwards suffer them to slide out of our minds, without leaving any impression behind them. If we look back upon the usual course of our feelings, we shall find that we are more influenced by the frequent recurrence of objects than by their weight and importance; and that habit has more force in forming our characters than our opinions have. The mind naturally takes its tone and complexion from what it habitually contemplates. Hence it is that the world, by continually pressing upon our senses, and being ever open to our view, takes so wide a sway in the heart. How think you, my dear brethren, must we correct this influence, and by faith overcome the world, unless we habitually turn our attention to religion and eternity? Let us beseech you, then, to make them familiar with your minds, and mingle them with the ordinary stream of your thoughts: retiring often from the world, and conversing with God and your own souls. In these solemn moments, nature, and the shifting scenes of it, will retire from your view, and you will feel yourselves left alone with God; you will walk as in his sight; you will stand, as it were, at his tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and every thing will appear in its true proportion and proper colour. You will estimate human life, and the worth of it, not by fleeting and momentary

sensations, but by the light of serious reflection and steady faith. You will see little in the past to please, or in the future to flatter; its feverish dreams will subside, and its enchantment be dissolved. It is much, however, if faith do not, upon such occasions, draw aside the veil which rests on futurity, and cut short the interval of expectation. How often has she borne aloft the spirits of good men, and given them a vision of better days and brighter hopes! They have entered already the rest which remained for them; they have *come to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to God, the Judge of all.* From these seasons of retirement and religious meditation, you will return to the active scenes of life with greater advantage. From the presence of God you will come forth with your passions more composed, your thoughts better regulated, and your hearts more steady and pure. Do not imagine that the benefit of such exercises is confined to the moments which are spent in them; for as the air retains the smell, and is filled with the fragrance of leaves which have been long shed, so will these meditations leave a sweet and refreshing influence behind them.

If your religion be genuine, it will be often the source of the warmest and most interesting feelings. It will be a spring of consolation within, which will often be full and pour itself forth. If the gospel has not taken a share in the feelings of our hearts, if it has not moved the great springs of our hopes and fears, we may be assured we have never experienced its force. It is filled with such views as cannot fail to interest and transport us. Besides, if we do not feel the gospel as well as believe it, how can it support against the overwhelming influence of what we *do* feel? The world steals upon us, and engages our affections on all sides. Its prospects enrapture, and its pleasures are seducing us. Will a religion which rests only upon opinion, and a conviction, at times extorted from us, keep us firm against those assaults, and stem the force of a torrent which never ceases to flow? This can be done only by opposing hope to hope, feeling to feeling, and pleasure to pleasure.

Perhaps one of the chief reasons why Christianity does not more purify our hearts is, that we are apt to confine it to seasons of worship, and to shut it out from the ordinary concerns of life. It is a great and fatal mistake to imagine them so separate that we can innocently and usefully engage in the one, without any regard had to the other. Our temporal affairs should never, indeed, be suffered to mingle with the exercises of religion; but religion should always regulate the conduct of our temporal affairs. The reason of this is obvious. *The world and the fashion of it is passing away*, and our union with it will soon be dissolved; whilst the relation which we bear to God, and to eternity, is ever the same, and extends to all times, and to all places. The character which, as Christians, we sustain, is our high character; and the hopes which, as such, we indulge, are our high hopes. It is but reasonable, it is but just, therefore, that a desire of discharging the one, and attaining the other, should sway the *whole* of our conduct. Perhaps you will be ready to think that this advice is impracticable. You will urge the necessity of attending to your worldly callings, which, you will say, cannot be carried on, unless you give them the greater part of your time and attention. Be it so. Remember, we do not advise you to spend more of your *time* in religion than in your ordinary concerns. This would extinguish all human industry. But, if you be sincere in your profession of religion, you will regulate your pursuits by it, and engage no further in any of them than is consistent with the spirit of it. In the midst of all your other concerns, you will still make religion the centre of your hopes, and the consummation of your wishes. An ordinary mechanic devotes more of his time to the labour of his hands than to any other concern; but it is not his laborious employment that interests his heart: it is his desire of procuring subsistence, and of warding off the inconveniences of poverty and want.

Finally, brethren, let each of us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not; let us not shrink from the severest test to which conscience and the word of God can put us. If we be, indeed, found sincere, after thus

searching our hearts, our faith will grow more firm, and our consolations more steady; or, if it appear that we have been hitherto deceiving and deceived, (awful idea!) we shall at least have an opportunity of once more lifting up our eyes for mercy, and of reading our danger in our sin, not in our punishment. *But we hope better things of you, brethren, and things which accompany salvation.* We hope that you have fled *from the wrath to come*, and have *laid hold on eternal life;* and we rejoice in the prospect of meeting you in a much larger assembly, at the great day, when you shall have washed your robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Then, *brought out of much tribulation*, and *redeemed from every nation, and tongue, and people*, his elect shall be gathered, he shall give up the kingdom to his God, and God shall be all in all. Alas! the voice of individual praise is weak and feeble; but how will our hearts swell with adoration and delight, when, while we are praising him, he shall receive from millions of beings, and millions of worlds, the same incense!

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS OF THE SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Northamptonshire Association.

[Written in 1809.]

ON THE

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Dear Brethren,

The subject to which we would invite your attention on the present occasion, is *the Influence of the Spirit;* which it is not our design to discuss in a doctrinal manner, (taking it for granted you are already established in the belief of a divine agency on the soul, and have a competent acquaintance with its nature and effects,) but rather with a view to assist you in making a suitable improvement of what you already acknowledge and believe. Assuming it on the ground of revelation for an undoubted fact, that there is an operation of the Holy Ghost, to which the regeneration and growth in holiness of every Christian is to be primarily imputed, and that without it nothing can be done or attained to any important purpose in religion; we request your candid attention to a few hints respecting the most likely method of securing and perpetuating that blessed influence. To this we are the more encouraged, by remarking the numerous cautions, warnings, and advices, with which the mention of this subject is joined in the sacred writings; sufficient to how that the doctrine of which it treats is a practical doctrine, not designed to supersede the use of means, or the exercise of our rational powers; but rather to stimulate us to exertion, and teach us how to exert them aright. *If ye live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, by which ye are sealed to the day of redemption.*

The Spirit, we must remember, is a most free agent, and though he will not utterly forsake the work of his hands, he may be expected to withdraw himself, in a great measure, on being slighted, neglected, or opposed; and as our holiness and comfort depend entirely upon him, it is important for us to know, what deportment is calculated to invite, and what to repel his presence.

1. If we would wish for much of the presence of God by his Spirit, we must learn to set a high value upon it. The first communication of spiritual influence, is, indeed, imparted without this requisite; for it cannot be possessed in any adequate degree except by those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. *I am found of them that sought me not.* But in subsequent donations, the Lord seems very much to regulate his conduct by a rule, that of bestowing his richest favours where he knows they are most coveted, and will be most prized. The principle whence divine communications flow, is free, unmerited benignity; but in the mode of dispensing its fruits, it is worthy of the supreme Ruler to consult his majesty, by withholding a copious supply, till he has excited in the heart a profound estimation of his gifts.

No words are adequate to express the excellence and dignity of the gift of the divine Spirit. While Solomon was dedicating the temple, his great soul appears to have been put into a rapture at the very idea, that he whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, should deign to dwell with man upon the earth. How much more should each of us be transported when he finds the idea realised, by his own heart having become the seat of the divine presence! There are two considerations drawn from scripture, which assist us in forming a conception of the magnitude of this blessing.

The first is, that it is the great promise of the Christian dispensation, and stands in nearly the same relation to us, that the coming of the Messiah did to pious Jews. They waited for the consolation of Israel in the birth of Christ; and now that event is past, we are waiting in a similar manner, for the promise of the Spirit, of which the church has hitherto enjoyed but the first fruits. To

this, the Saviour, after his resurrection, pointed the expectation of his apostles, as emphatically the promise of the Father, which they were to receive at the distance of a few days; and when it was accomplished at the day of Pentecost, we find Peter insisting on it as the most illustrious proof of his ascension, as well as the chief fruit that converts were to reap from their repentance and baptism. *Repent and be baptized*, said he, *every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the promise* (that is, the promise of the Spirit) *is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call.* The apostle Paul places it in a similar light when he tells us, *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles:* and in what that blessing consists, he informs us, by adding, *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.* On this account, probably, he is styled the *Spirit of promise*, that is, *the Spirit so often promised;* in the communication of whom, the promises of God so centre, that it may be considered as the sum and substance of all the promises.

Another consideration, which evinces the supreme importance of this gift, is, that, in the esteem of our Lord, it was more than a compensation to his disciples, for the loss of his bodily presence; so much superior to it, that he tells them, it was expedient he should leave them in order to make way for it. *If I go not away, the Spirit will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Great as the advantages were they derived from his society, they yet remained in a state of minority; their views were contracted, their hearts full of earthly adhesions, and a degree of carnality and prejudice attended them, which it was the office of the Spirit only to remove. From his more ample and effectual teaching, a great increase of knowledge was to accrue, to qualify them for their work of bearing witness to Christ, and a powerful energy to go forth, which was to render their ministry, though in themselves so much inferior, far more success-

ful than the personal ministry of our Lord. In consequence of his agency, the apostles were to become enlightened and intrepid, and the world convinced. *I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now But when the Spirit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth. He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement.* Accordingly, after his descent we find the apostles strangely transformed: an unction, a fervour, a boldness, marked their character, to which they had hitherto been strangers; and such conviction attended their preaching, that in a short time a great part of the world sunk under the weapons of their holy warfare. Nor is there any pretence for alleging, that this communication was confined to miraculous gifts, since it is asserted to be that Spirit which should abide in them for ever, and by which the church should be distinguished from the world. He is styled, *the Spirit of truth, whom the world could not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but,* it is added, *ye know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you.*

As we are indebted to the Spirit for the first formation of the divine life, so it is he who alone can maintain it, and render it strong and vigorous. It is his office to actuate the habits of grace where they are already planted; to hold our souls in life, and to *strengthen us that we may walk up and down in the name of the Lord.* It is his office to present the mysteries of salvation; the truths which relate to the mediation of Christ and the riches of his grace, in so penetrating and transforming a manner, as to render them vital, operating principles, the food and the solace of our spirits. Without his agency, however intrinsically excellent, they will to us be mere dead speculation, an inert mass: it is only when they are animated by his breath, that they become spirit and life.

It is his office to afford that anointing, by which we may know all things; not only by a light which is merely directive to the understanding, but which so shines upon the heart, as to give a relish of the sweetness of divine truth, and effectually produce a compliance with its dictates. It belongs to him *to seal us to the day of redemption;* to put that mark and character upon us, which distinguishes the children of God, as well as to afford a foretaste and an earnest of the future inheritance. *And hereby,* saith an apostle, *we know that we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* It is his office to subdue the corruption of our nature, not by leaving us inactive spectators of the combat, but by engaging us to a determined resistance to every sinful propensity, by teaching our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so that the victory shall be ours, and the praise his. *To help the infirmities of saints, who know not what to pray for as they ought, by making intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered,* is an important branch of his office. He kindles their desires, gives them a glimpse of the fulness of God, that all-comprehending good; and by exciting a relish of the beauties of holiness, and the ineffable pleasure which springs from nearness to God, disposes them to the fervent and effectual prayer which availeth much. In short, as Christ is the way to the Father, so it is equally certain, that the Spirit is the fountain of all the light and strength which enable us to walk in that way. Lest it should be suspected that in ascribing so much to the agency of the Spirit, we diminish the obligations we owe to the Redeemer, it may not be improper to remark, that the tendency of what we have advanced, rightly understood, will be just the contrary, since the Scriptures constantly remind us, that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the fruit of his mediation, and the purchase of his death. It was his interposing as *Emmanuel, God with us,* to repair the breach betwixt man and God, that prevailed upon the Father to communicate the Spirit to such as believe on him, and to intrust the whole agency of it to his hands. As the reward of his sufferings, he ascended on high, and received gifts for men; of which, the right of bestowing the Spirit is the principal, that the Lord God might dwell among them. The donation, in every instance, through the successive periods of the church, looks back to the death of the Redeemer, as the root and principle whence it takes its rise, and consequently is calculated to enlarge our conceptions

of his office and character, as the copiousness of the streams evinces the exuberance of the fountain. To him the Spirit was given above measure; in him it resides as in an inexhaustible spring, to be imparted in the dispensation of his gospel to every member of his mystical body, in pursuance of the purpose of his grace, and the ends of his death. It is *his* Spirit: hence we read of *the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus*, not only by reason of the essential union which subsists between the persons of the Godhead, but because the right of bestowing it was ascertained to him in the covenant of redemption.

2. If we would wish to enjoy much of the light and influence of the Spirit, we must seek it by fervent prayer. There are peculiar encouragements held out in the word of God to this purpose. *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* To illustrate the readiness of our heavenly Father to bestow this blessing, our Lord borrows a comparison from the instinct of parental affection, which prompts a parent to give with alacrity good things to his children. He will not merely supply his wants, which benevolence might prompt him to do with respect to a stranger, but he will do it with feelings peculiar to the parental relation, and will experience as much pleasure in conferring, as the child in receiving, his favours. It is thus with our heavenly Father: he delights in exercising kindness to his children, and especially in promoting their spiritual welfare. He gives not merely with the liberality of a prince, but with the heart of a father. It is worth remarking, that in relating the preceding discourse, while one evangelist makes express mention of the Spirit, another speaks only of good things, intimating that the communications of the Spirit comprehend whatever is good. Other things may, or may not, be ultimately beneficial: they are either of a doubtful nature in themselves, or are rendered so by the propensity our corruption gives us to abuse them. But the influence of the Spirit, by its efficacy in subduing that corruption, must be invariably beneficial; it is such an immediate emanation from God the fountain of blessedness, that it can never fail of being

intrinsically, essentially, and eternally good. It is also deserving our attention, that the injunction of seeking it by prayer, is prefaced by a parable constructed on purpose to teach us the propriety of urging our suit with importunity. In imploring other gifts (which we are at liberty to do with submission), it is still a great point of duty to moderate our desires, and to be prepared for a disappointment; because, as we have already remarked, it is possible the things we are seeking, may neither conduce to the glory of God, nor to our ultimate benefit; for "who knoweth what is good for a man all the days of this his *vain life?*" But when we present our requests for a larger measure of his grace, we labour under no such uncertainty, we may safely let forth all the ardour and vehemence of our spirits, since our desires are fixed upon what is the very knot and juncture, where the honour of God and the interests of his creatures are indissolubly united. Desires after grace are, in fact, desires after God; and how is it possible they can be too vehement or intense, when directed to such an object? His gracious presence is not like the limited goods of this life, fitted to a particular crisis, or adapted to a special exigency in a fluctuating scene of things: it is alike suited to all times and seasons, the food of souls, the proper good of man, under every aspect of providence, and even the exchange of worlds. *My soul*, said David, *panteth after God, yea, for the living God. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.* The most eminent effusions of the Spirit we read of in scripture, were not only afforded to prayer, but appear to have taken place at the very time that exercise was performed. The descent of the Holy Ghost, at the day of Pentecost, was while the disciples were with one accord in one place; and after the imprisonment of Peter and John, who being dismissed, went to their own company, *While they prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken with a mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* When a new heart and a new spirit are promised in Ezekiel, it is added, *I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.*

3. Habitual dependence on divine influence is an important duty. This may be considered as opposed to two things; first, to depending on ourselves, to the neglect of divine agency; next, to despondency and distrust. When the Holy Spirit has condescended to take the conduct of souls, it is unquestionably great presumption to enter upon duty in the same manner as if no such assistance were needed, or to be expected; and the result will be as with Samson, who said, *I will go forth and shake myself, as in time past, while he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* It is one thing to acknowledge a dependence on heavenly influence in speculation, and another thing so to realise and to feel it as to say from the heart, *I will go in the strength of the Lord God.* A mere assent to this proposition, that the Spirit must concur in the production of every good work, (an assent not easily withheld without rejecting the Scriptures,) falls very short of the practical homage due from feeble worms to so great an Agent; and a most solemn and explicit acknowledgment of entire dependence, may reasonably be expected. When you engage in prayer, or in any other duty, endeavour to enter upon it with a serious and deliberate recollection of your need of the Spirit. Let the consciousness of your weakness and insufficiency for every good work be a sentiment rendered familiar to your minds, and deeply impressed on your hearts.

But while we recommend this, there is another extreme against which we think it our duty to guard you, and that is, a disposition to despondency and distrust. We are most ready to acknowledge that the assistance you need is most free and gratuitous, neither given to our deservings, nor flowing from any natural connexion subsisting betwixt our endeavours and the exertion of divine agency. The Spirit of God is a free Spirit; and it is impossible to conceive how either faith or prayer should have an intrinsic efficacy in drawing down influence from heaven. There is, however, a connexion established by divine vouchsafement, which entitles believers to expect, in the use of means, such measures

of gracious assistance as are requisite to sustain and support them in their religious course. The Spirit is spoken of as the matter of promise to which every christian is encouraged to look: *the promise is to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord your God shall call.* Agreeable to this, it is represented as the express purpose of Christ's becoming a curse for us, that the *promise of the Spirit might come on the Gentiles through faith.* The same expectation is justified by the Saviour's own declaration, when on the last and great day of the feast he stood and cried. *Whoever is athirst, let him come unto me and drink; for he that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This,* says the evangelist, *he spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

The readiness of the Holy Ghost to communicate himself to true believers, is also evinced by the tenour of evangelical precepts: *be ye strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* To command a person to be strong seems strange and unusual language, but is sufficiently explained when we reflect that a portion of spiritual power is ready to be communicated to those who duly seek it: *be ye filled with the Spirit,* which is the exhortation of the same apostle, takes it for granted that a copious supply is at hand, sufficient to satiate the desires of the saints. We are at a loss to account for such precepts, without supposing an established connexion betwixt the condition of believers and the further communication of divine influence. To the same purpose Paul speaks with apostolic authority, *this I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;* and Jude inculcates the duty of praying in the Spirit, which would be strange if no assistance were to be obtained; and as prayer is a duty of daily occurrence, the injunction implies that it is ready to be imparted to christians, not by fits and starts, or at distant intervals, but in a stated, regular course.

For this reason, when we hear christians complaining of the habitual withdrawment of the divine presence, we are under the necessity of ascribing it to their own

fault: not that we mean to deny there is much of sovereignty in this affair, or that *the Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth.* But it should be remembered, we are now adverting to the situation of real believers, who are entitled to the promise; and though it is probable there is much of sovereignty exercised even with respect to *them,* we apprehend it rather concerns those influences which are conso'atory, than such as are sanctifying; though there is a degree of satisfaction intermingled with every exercise of genuine piety, yet it is manifest some influences of the Spirit tend more immediately to comfort, others to purification. By some we are engaged in the fixed contemplation of objects which exist out of ourselves, the perfections of God, the excellency of Christ, the admirable constitution of the gospel, accompanied with a delightful conviction of a personal interest in whatever comes under our view; the natural fruit of which is *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* By others, we are more immediately impressed with a lasting sense of our extreme unworthiness, and made to mourn over remaining corruption, and the criminal defects inherent in our best services.

In the midst of such exercises, it is possible hope may languish, and comfort be reduced to a low ebb, yet the divine life may be still advancing, and the soul growing in humility, deadness to the world, and the mortification of her own will, as the sap during winter retires to the root of the plant, ready to ascend and produce verdure and beauty on the return of spring. *This is the will of God, even our sanctification;* and though he delights in comforting his people at proper seasons, he is much less intent on this than in promoting their spiritual improvement, to which, in this their probationary state, every thing is made subservient. Let us not then confound the decay of consolation with the decay of piety, nor imagine we can want the aids necessary to prevent the latter, unless we have forfeited them by presumption, negligence, and sloth. Whenever christians sensibly decline in religion, they ought to charge themselves with the guilt of having grieved the Spirit; they should take the alarm, *repent and do their first works;* they are

suffering under the rebukes of that paternal justice which God exercises in his own family. Such a measure of gracious assistance in the use of means, being by the tenour of the new covenant *ascertained* to real christians, as is requisite for their comfortable walk with God, to find it withheld should engage them in deep searchings of heart; and make them fear lest *a promise being left them of entering into rest, they should appear to come short of it.* But this leads us to observe, in the last place, that

4. If we wish to enjoy the light of the Spirit, we must take care to maintain a deportment suited to the character of that divine agent. When the apostle exhorts us not to *grieve the Spirit of God, by which we are sealed to the day of redemption,* it is forcibly implied that he is susceptible of offence, and that to offend him involves heinous ingratitude and folly: ingratitude, for what a requital is this for being sealed to the day of redemption! and folly, inasmuch as we may fitly say on this, as Paul did on a different occasion, *Who is he that maketh us glad, but the same that is made sorry by us?* Have we any other comforter when he is withdrawn? Is there a single ray of light can visit us in his absence, or can we be safe for a moment without his guidance and support? If the immense and infinite Spirit, by a mysterious condescension, deigns to undertake the conduct of a worm, ought it not to yield the most implicit submission? The appropriate duty owing to a faithful and experienced guide is a ready compliance with his dictates; and how much more may this be expected, when the disparity betwixt the parties in question is no less than infinite? The language of the Holy Ghost, in describing the manners of the ancient Israelites, is awfully monitory to professors of religion in every age; *they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them.* As we wish to avoid whatever is more curious than useful, we shall not stay to inquire precisely on what occasions, or to what extent, the Spirit is capable of being resisted: it may be sufficient to observe, it is evident from melancholy experience, that it is very possible to neglect what

is the obvious tendency of his motions, which is invariably to produce universal holiness. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, faith:* whatever is contrary to these involves an opposition to the Spirit, and is directly calculated to quench his sacred influence.

From his descending on Christ in the form of a dove, as well as from many express declarations of scripture, we may with certainty conclude the indulgence of all the irascible and malignant passions to be peculiarly repugnant to his nature, and it is remarkable, that the injunction of not grieving the Holy Spirit is immediately followed by a particular caution against cherishing such dispositions: *let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Have you not found by experience, that the indulgence of the former has destroyed that self-recollection and composure which are so essential to devotion? Vindictive passions surround the soul with a sort of turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing can be conceived more opposite to that calm and holy light in which the blessed Spirit loves to dwell. The indulgence of sensual lusts, or of whatever enslaves the soul to the appetites of the body, in violation of the rules of sobriety and chastity, it seems almost unnecessary to add, must have a direct tendency to quench his sacred influences; wherever such desires prevail they war against the soul, immerse it in carnality, and utterly indispose it to every thing spiritual and heavenly. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;* it bears a resemblance to its author in being a spiritual production, which requires to be nourished by divine meditation, by pure and holy thoughts.

If you wish to live in the fellowship of the Spirit, you must guard with no less care against the encroachments of worldly-mindedness; recollecting we are christians just as far as our treasures and our hearts are placed in heaven, and no farther. A heart overcharged with the cares of this world, is as disqualified for converse with

God, and for walking in the Spirit, as by surfeiting and drunkenness; to which, by their tendency to intoxicate and stupify, they bear a great resemblance.

How many, by an immoderate attachment to wealth, and by being determined at all events to become rich, *have fallen into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows!* and where the result has not been so signally disastrous, a visible languor in religion has ensued, the friendship of serious christians been shunned, and the public ordinances of religion attended with little fruit or advantage. As it is the design of the Spirit, in his sacred visitations, to form us for an habitual converse with spiritual and eternal objects, nothing can tend more directly to contract it, than to bury our souls in earth: it is as impossible for the eye of the mind, as for that of the body, to look opposite ways at once; nor can we aim at *the things which are seen and temporal*, but by losing sight of those *which are unseen and eternal.*

But though a general attention to the duties of piety and virtue, and careful avoidance of the sins opposed to these, is certainly included in a becoming deportment to the Holy Spirit, perhaps it is not *all* that is included. The children of God are characterized in scripture by their being *led by the Spirit: led*, evidently not impelled, not driven forward in a headlong course, without choice or design; but being, by the constitution of their nature, rational and intelligent, and, by the influence of grace, rendered spiritual, they are disposed to obey at a touch, and to comply with the gentler insinuations of divine grace; they are ready to take that precise impression which corresponds with the mind and purpose of the Spirit. You are aware of what consequence it is in worldly concerns to embrace opportunities, and to improve critical seasons; and thus, in the things of the Spirit, there are times peculiarly favourable, moments of happy visitation, where much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual interest than usual. These are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and of power, which no assiduity in the means of

grace can command, but which it is a great point of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather, and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine, and every falling shower, how much more alert and attentive should we be in watching for those influences from above which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop! As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit.

The design of his operation is in one view invariably the same, the production of holiness; but the branches of which that consists, and the exercises of mind which are rendered subservient to it, are various; and he who is intent on walking in the Spirit will be careful to fall in with that train of thought, and cherish that cast of reflection, to which he is especially invited. For want of more docility in this respect it is probable we have often sustained loss. Permit us here to suggest two or three heads of inquiry. You have sometimes felt a peculiar seriousness of mind; the delusive glare of worldly objects has faded away, or become dim before your eyes, and death and eternity appearing at the door. have filled the whole field of vision. Have you improved such seasons for fixing those maxims, and establishing those practical conclusions, which may produce an habitual sobriety of mind, when things appear under a different aspect? You have sometimes found, instead of a reluctance to pray, a powerful impulse to that exercise, so that you felt as if you could do nothing else. Have you always complied with these motions, and suffered nothing but the claims of absolute necessity to divert you from pouring out your hearts at the throne of grace? The Spirit is said to make intercession for saints, with groanings which cannot be uttered. When you have felt those ineffable longings after God, have you indulged

them to the utmost? Have you stretched every sail, launched forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, and possessed yourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God? There are moments when the conscience of a good man is more tender, has a nicer and more discriminating touch than usual; the evil of sin in general, and of his own in particular, appears in a more pure and piercing light. Have you availed yourselves of such seasons as these for searching into the chambers of imagery, and, while you detected greater and greater abominations, been at pains to bring them out, and slay them before the Lord? Have such visitations effected something towards the mortification of sin; or have they been suffered to expire in mere ineffectual resolutions? The fruits which godly sorrow produced in the Corinthians were thus beautifully portrayed; *What carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what revenge.* There are moments in the experience of a good man, when he feels a more than ordinary softness of mind; the frost of selfishness dissolves, and his heart flows forth in love to God and his fellow-creatures. How careful should we be to cherish such a frame, and to embrace the opportunity of subduing resentments, and of healing those sore wounds which it is scarcely possible to avoid in passing through this unquiet world.

There is a holy skill in turning the several parts of christian experience to account, analogous to what the votaries of the world display in the improvement of every conjuncture from which it is possible to derive any emolument; and though the end they propose is mean and contemptible, the steadiness with which they pursue it, and their dexterity in the choice of means, deserve imitation. In these respects *they are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*

Do not allow yourselves to indulge in religious sloth, or to give way to the solicitations of the tempter, from a confidence in the safety of your state, or in your spiritual immunities as christians. The habitual prevalence of such a disposition will afford a much stronger proof of

insincerity than any arguments which can be adduced for the contrary; and admitting your pretensions to piety to be ever so valid, a little reflection may convince you that a careless and negligent course will lay you open to the severest rebukes. *You only have I known* (says the Lord by the Prophet), *among all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit you for all your iniquities.*

Remember, dear brethren, we profess a peculiar relation to God as his children, his witnesses, his people, his temple; the character of that glorious Being, and of his religion, will be contemplated by the world, chiefly through the medium of our spirit and conduct, which ought to display, as in a mirror, the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is strictly appropriate to the subject of our present meditations, to remind you that you are temples. *For ye*, says the apostle, *are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* What purity, sanctity, and dignity may be expected in persons who bear such a character! A christian should look upon himself as something sacred and devoted, so that what involves but an ordinary degree of criminality in others, in him partakes of the nature of sacrilege; what is a breach of trust in others, is in him the profanation of a temple. Let us, dear brethren, watch and pray that nothing may be allowed a place in our hearts, that is not suitable to the residence of the holy and blessed God. Finally, *having such great and precious promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.*

* Having thus endeavoured to lay before you the most likely methods of obtaining the communications of the Spirit, as well as to show the great importance of this

* When Mr. Hall consented to the publication of this Circular Letter as a Tract, he annexed a few sentences of pointed application. These escaped the notice of the Editor, in the first edition, but are now subjoined.

gift, we might now dismiss the subject, were we not desirous of first guarding you against a dangerous mistake. The mistake to which we refer, is that of taking conviction for conversion, certain impressions of the guilt and danger of sin made upon the conscience, for the saving operations of the Spirit. These convictions are important: it is highly desirable and necessary to have a settled persuasion of the established connexion betwixt sin and punishment, and as a natural consequence to feel uneasiness and alarm, in proportion as we have reason to believe our sins are yet unpardoned. Until we see ourselves *lost*, we shall never truly come to Christ for salvation. Until we feel our malady, and dread its consequences, we shall never have recourse to the Physician, or be willing to comply with his prescription. We adjure you, therefore, as you value your eternal interests, not to trifle with convictions, or to endeavour to wear off religious concern and uneasiness, by the vanities of life, and the stupefactions of pleasure. Regard and cherish them as the sacred visitations of heaven; look upon them as mercifully designed to rouse and awaken you from a fatal stupor. They are often the harbingers of mercy.

Wherever the Spirit of God is in reality, he will convince of sin; but conviction is produced in thousands who still remain destitute of saving grace.—That influence of the Spirit by which a *change of heart* is effected, is essentially different from the distress and alarm which may be resolved into the exercise of mere natural conscience. For a man to be convinced that he is a sinner, and to tremble at the apprehension of wrath to come, is certainly something very distinct from becoming a new creature. Real christians have not only perceived their danger, but have fled for refuge; have not only been less or more troubled with a sense of guilt, but, in consequence of coming to Christ, have found rest for their souls. On a review of your past life, you perceive innumerable transgressions, it may be, and are perfectly convinced that you have been "walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the

children of disobedience." So far it is well: your apprehensions are just, and well founded; and your situation more replete with danger than you have ever conceived it to be. Do not however rest here. Let the views you entertain excite you the more earnestly to press into the kingdom of God. Let them engage you to a more diligent use of the means of grace, and, above all, let them lead you to fix your hope and trust on the Redeemer, whose blood alone can cleanse you from all sin, and whose intercession is able to save "to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. Apply to him with humble faith and ardent prayer, and though you may be tempted to cherish doubts of the extent of his power and grace, say with him of old, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Lay aside, as far as possible, every other concern; postpone your attention to every other object, till you have reason to believe you have obtained mercy, and are renewed in the spirit of your mind. Address the throne of grace with increasing importunity, remembering who hath said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." In all your addresses to God, make use of the name and intercession of Christ, plead the efficacy of his blood, and the encouragement he hath afforded sinners in his gospel to return to God. Keep a continual watch over your words, thoughts, and actions: keep your heart with all diligence. Guard, with the utmost care, against levity and sloth, two of the most dangerous snares that can entangle the souls of men.

If you ask how you may know whether you are partakers of the special grace of God? we reply, This will be best ascertained by its fruits. When you feel a fixed hatred of sin, an intense thirst after holiness and perfection, and a delight in the word and ways of God, when you are habitually disposed to dwell on the thoughts of Christ and heaven, when the Saviour appears unspeakably precious, as the pearl of great price, and you are habitually ready to part with every thing for his sake, you may be certain that you are born of God. These

are the fruits of the Spirit, which sufficiently demonstrate the influence and presence of that blessed Agent. Till you have experienced effects of this kind, you are in a wretched state, though surrounded with all the brightest earthly prospects, because you are estranged from God, and exposed to his eternal wrath and displeasure.

ON HEARING THE WORD:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Northamptonshire Association.

[Written in 1613.]

ON HEARING THE WORD.

Dear Brethren,

The subject on which we addressed you, at our last anniversary, was the proper method of Reading the Word of God; as a natural sequel to which, we beg leave, on the present occasion, to suggest a few hints of advice respecting the duty of Hearing it.

Preaching is an ordinance of God not entirely confined to the christian dispensation. From the Old Testament history, it appears that Ezra, upon the return of the Jews from Babylon, assembled them in the streets of Jerusalem, and ascending a stage, or pulpit, for the advantage of being better seen and heard, read the law in the ears of the people, and *gave the interpretation thereof.* It is probable that he did little more than, agreeable to the natural import of the phrase *interpretation*, translate, paragraph by paragraph, the Hebrew original into the Syriac, or Chaldee, which had become, during a captivity of forty years, the vernacular language of the Jews. From that time, however, synagogues were erected in all the cities throughout Judea, and regular officers appointed to read, first the Pentateuch, and, after the persecution by Antiochus, the Prophets, and explain them in ample paraphrases or comments. Such was the origin of preaching.

When the fulness of time was come for God, in his infinite mercy, to send forth his Son, his appearance was first announced by John's proclaiming in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord;* which, after a short time, was succeeded by the personal ministry of Christ and his apostles, with whom the dispensation of the gospel, properly speaking, commenced. After his resur-

rection, our Lord extended the commission of the apostles to all nations, saying, *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;* or, as you have it in Mark, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

Upon the formation of christian churches, an order of men was appointed in each society for the express purpose of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments: wherein the wisdom and kindness of the Great Head of the church is eminently conspicuous; for such are the necessary avocations of life, so little leisure most christians possess for the acquisition of knowledge, and such the deficiency of many in the elementary parts of education, that they will always, under God, be chiefly indebted to this appointment for any extensive acquaintance with divine truth. The privilege of *reading* the Scriptures in our native language is of inestimable value; but, were it much more universal than it is, it would not supersede the necessity of hearing the Word: for there are not only difficulties in the Bible which require to be elucidated, and seeming contradictions to be solved, but the living voice of a preacher is admirably adapted to awaken attention, and to excite an interest, as well as to apply the general truths of revelation to the various cases of christian experience, and the regulation of human conduct. When an important subject is presented to an audience, with an ample illustration of its several parts, its practical improvement enforced, and its relation to the conscience and the heart insisted upon with seriousness, copiousness, and fervour, it is adapted, in the nature of things, to produce a more deep and lasting impression than can usually be expected from reading. He who knows *how forcible are right words*, and how apt man is to be moved by man, has consulted the constitution of our frame, by appointing an order of men, whose office it is to address their fellow-creatures on their eternal concerns. Strong feeling is naturally contagious; and if, as the Wise Man observes, *as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend;* the combined effect of countenance, gesture, and voice, accompanying a powerful appeal to the understanding and the heart, on subjects of everlasting moment, can scarcely fail of being great.

But, independently of the natural tendency of the christian ministry to promote spiritual improvement, it derives a peculiar efficacy from its being a divine appointment. It is not merely a natural, it is also an *instituted* means of good; and whatever God appoints, by special authority, he graciously engages to bless, provided it be attended to with right dispositions, and from right motives. The means of grace are, as the words import, the consecrated channels in which his spiritual mercies flow; and, as the communication of spiritual blessings always implies an exertion of divine power, so these become the stated instrument, or occasion of its exercise. These are emphatically his ways, in which he is wont to walk with his people. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.** Though the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, where the gospel is not preached the effects of his operation are rarely to be discerned, and we witness few or no indications of a renewed character out of the bounds of Christendom. From the history of religion, in all ages, it appears that the Spirit is accustomed to follow in the footsteps of his revealed Word; and that, wherever his work lies, he prepares his way by first communicating the Oracles of God. When he proposed to take out a people for his name from among the Gentiles, the first step he took was to commission the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature. To this St. Paul most solemnly directs our attention, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, as the grand instrument of human salvation:—*When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* So intimate by divine appointment, is the connexion betwixt the salvation of man and the ministry of the Word, that the method of salvation, under the gospel, derives from the latter its distinguishing appellation, being denominated the *hearing of*

* Isaiah lxiv. 5.

faith. St. Jude, in like manner, asserts it to be the instrumental cause of our regeneration. *Of his own will begat he us, by the Word of Truth.* And to the same purpose St. Peter reminds the christians, whom he was addressing, *that they were born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God; which word,* he adds, *is by the gospel preached unto you.* The *written* Word, we are told, indeed, from the highest authority, is able to make us wise unto salvation, and many pleasing instances of its saving efficacy might be produced to confirm this position; but, as the gospel was preached before it was penned, it is certain that most of the passages which speak on this subject are to be referred to its public ministry, and that, in subsequent ages, God has put a distinguishing honour upon it, by employing it as the principal means of accomplishing his saving purposes. There is every reason to suppose that the far greater part of those who have been truly sanctified and enlightened, will ascribe the change they have experienced principally to the *hearing of faith.*

What a powerful motive results from thence to take heed how we hear! If we feel any concern for a share in the great salvation, how careful should we be not to neglect the principal means of obtaining it! If there be a class from whom the spiritual beauty and glory of the gospel remain concealed, it consists of a description of persons the very mention of whom ought to make us tremble. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* Let no man allow himself to neglect the hearing of the Word, or hear it in a careless or irreverent manner, under the pretence of his having an opportunity of reading it in private; since the public ministry possesses, with respect to its tendency to excite the attention and interest the heart, many unquestionable advantages. Besides, such a pretence will generally be found to be hollow and disingenuous. If you observe a person habitually inattentive under an awakening, searching ministry, follow him into his retirement, and, it may be confidently predicted, you will seldom see the Bible in his hands; or, if he overcome his aversion to religion so

far as occasionally to peruse a chapter, it will be in the same spirit in which he hears: he will satisfy himself with having completed his task, *and straightway go his way and forget what manner of man he was.* If the general course of the world were as favourable to religion as it is the contrary; if an intercourse with mankind were a school of piety; the state of such persons would be less hopeless, and there would be a greater probability of their being gained without the Word: but while every thing around us conspires to render the mind earthly and sensual, and the world is continually moulding and transforming its votaries, the situation of such as attend the means of grace in a careless manner is unspeakably dangerous, since they are continually exposing themselves to influences which corrupt, while they render themselves inaccessible to such as are of a salutary operation. What can be expected but the death of that patient who takes a course which is continually inflaming his disease, while he despises and neglects the remedy? When we see men attentive under the ministry of the Word, and evidently anxious to comprehend its truths, we cannot but entertain hopes of their salvation; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is observed of the Jews at Berea, *that they were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so;* and the result was such as might be expected—a great multitude of them believed. Candid and attentive hearers place themselves, so to speak, in the way of the Spirit: while those who cannot be prevailed upon to give it serious attention may most justly be said to *put the kingdom of God far from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.* To such the awful threatenings recorded in the Proverbs are most applicable:—*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* In such cases, the ministers of the gospel can do little more, than like Jeremiah, retire to *weep in secret places for their pride.*

But as we, who are assembled on the present occasion, consist of ministers and delegates from a number of associated churches, which we consider ourselves as addressing in these our circular epistles, we shall confine ourselves, in our subsequent remarks, to such heads of advice on the duty of hearing the Word, as are appropriate to the character of professing christians. We will consider ourselves as addressing such, and such only, as must be supposed, in a judgement of charity, to have an experimental acquaintance with divine truth.

First. Previous to your entering into the house of God, seek *a prepared heart*, and implore the blessing of God on the ministry of his Word. It may be presumed that no real christian will neglect to preface his attendance on social worship with secret prayer. But let the acquisition of a devout and serious frame, freed from the cares, vanities, and pollutions of the world, accompanied with earnest desires after God, and the communications of his grace, form a principal subject of your private devotions. Forget not to implore a blessing on the public ministry, that it may accomplish in yourselves, and to others, the great purposes it is designed to answer; and that those measures of assistance may be afforded to your ministers which shall replenish them with light, love, and liberty, that they may speak the mystery of the gospel as it ought to be spoken. Pastors and people would both derive eminent advantages from such a practice; they, in their capacity of exhibiting, you, in your preparation for receiving, the mysteries of the gospel. As the duties of the closet have the happiest tendency, by solemnizing and elevating the mind, to prepare for those of the sanctuary, so the conviction of your having borne your minister on your heart before the throne of grace would, apart from every other consideration, dispose him to address you with augmented zeal and tenderness. We should consider it as such a token for good, as well as such an unequivocal proof of your attachment, as would greatly animate and support us under all our discouragements.

Secondly. Establish in your minds the highest *reverence and esteem* of the glorious gospel. Recollect the miracles wrought to confirm it; the sanction, the awful sanction, by which a due reception of it is enforced, and the infinite value of that blood by which its blessings were ratified and procured. Recollect that on its acceptance or rejection, on the effects which it produces on the heart and life, depends our state for eternity; since there is no other mean devised for our recovery, no other name given under heaven by which we can be saved, besides that which it exhibits. It is not merely the incorruptible seed of regeneration; it is also the mould in which our souls must be cast, agreeable to the apostle's beautiful metaphor:—*You have obeyed from the heart that form* (or mould) *of doctrine into which ye were delivered.* In order to our bearing the image of Christ, who is the firstborn among many brethren, it is necessary to receive its impress in every part; nor is there any thing in us what it ought to be, any thing truly excellent, but in proportion to its conformity to that pattern. Its operation is not to be confined to time or place; it is the very element in which the christian is appointed to live, and to receive continual accessions of spiritual strength and purity, until he is presented faultless in the presence of the divine glory. The more you esteem the gospel, the more will you be attached to that ministry in which its doctrines are developed, and its duties explained and inculcated; because, in the present state of the world, it is the chief, though not the only means, of possessing yourselves of its advantages. To tremble at God's Word is also mentioned as one of the most essential features in the character of him to whom God will look with approbation.

Thirdly. Hear the Word with *attention.* If you are convinced of the justice of the preceding remarks, nothing further is requisite to convince you of the propriety of this advice, since they all combine to enforce it. We would only remark, in general, that the knowledge derived from a discourse depends entirely upon attention, in exact proportion to which will be the pro-

gress made by a mind of a given capacity. Not to listen with attention is the same thing as to have ears which hear not, and eyes which see not. While you are hearing, whatever trains of thought of a foreign and extraneous nature obtrude themselves, should be resolutely repelled. In the power of fixing the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly; but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself in this respect, acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity: it is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a habit of attention, it will become natural, thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall, by degrees, experience no difficulty in following the track of the longest connected discourse. As we find it easy to attend to what interests the heart, and the thoughts naturally follow the course of the affections, the best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction is the love of the truth. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," and to hear it attentively will be a pleasure, not a task.

The practice of sleeping in places of worship, a practice we believe not prevalent in any other places of public resort, is not only a gross violation of the advice we are giving, but most distressing to ministers, and most disgraceful to those who indulge it. If the apostle indignantly inquires of the Corinthians whether they had not houses to eat and drink in, may we not, with equal propriety, ask those who indulge in this practice, whether they have not beds to sleep in, that they convert the house of God into a dormitory? A little self-denial, a very gentle restraint on the appetite, would, in most cases, put a stop to this abomination; and with what propriety can he pretend to desire the sincere milk of the Word, who cannot be prevailed upon, one day out of seven, to refrain from the glutting which absolutely disqualifies him for receiving it?

Fourthly. Hear the Word of God with *impartiality.*

To be partial in the law was a crime formerly charged upon the Jewish priests; nor is it less sinful in the professors of christianity. There is a class of hearers who have their favourite topics, to which they are so immoderately attached, that they are offended if they are not brought forward on all occasions; while there are others, of at least equal importance, which they can seldom be prevailed upon to listen to with patience. Some are never pleased but with doctrinal statements; they are in raptures while the preacher is insisting on the doctrines of grace, and the privileges of God's people; but when he proceeds to inculcate the practical improvement of these doctrines, and the necessity of adorning the profession of them by the virtues of a holy life, their countenances fall, and they make no secret of their disgust. Others are all for practical preaching, while they have no relish for that truth which can alone sanctify the heart. But as it is a symptom of a diseased state of body to be able to relish only one sort of food, it is not less of the mind to have a taste for only one sort of instruction. It is difficult to suppose that such persons love the Word of God, as the Word of God; for, if they did, every part of it, in its due proportion, and its proper place, would be acceptable. It is possible, in consequence of the various exigencies of the christian life, that there may be seasons to which some views of divine truth may be peculiarly suited, and on that account heard with superior advantage and delight; but this is perfectly consistent with an impartial attachment to the whole of revelation. But to feel an habitual distaste to instruction, the most solid and scriptural, unless it be confined to a few favourite topics, is an infallible indication of a wrong state of mind. It is only by yielding the soul to the impression of every divine communication and discovery, that the several graces which enter into the composition of the new creature are nourished and sustained. As the perfection of the christian system results from the symmetry of its several parts, in which there is nothing redundant, nothing disproportioned, and nothing defective; so the beauty of the christian character consists in its exhibiting

an adequate impress and representation of the whole. If there be any particular branch of the Word of God to which we are habitually indisposed, we may generally conclude that is precisely the part which we most need; and, instead of indulging our distaste, we ought seriously to set ourselves to correct the mental disease which has given occasion to it.

In some instances, the partiality to certain views of truth, to the exclusion of others of which we are complaining, may arise, not so much from moral disorder, as from a deficiency of religious knowledge, and that contraction of mind which is its usual consequence. We would earnestly exhort persons of this description not to make themselves the standard, nor attempt to confine their ministers to the first principles of the Oracles of God. There are in most assemblies some who are capable of digesting strong meat, whose improvement ought to be consulted; and it behoves such as are not, instead of abridging the provisions of the family, to endeavour to enlarge their knowledge, and extend their inquiries. A christian minister is compared by our Lord to an householder, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

Fifthly. Hear the Word with constant *self-application.* Hear not for others, but for yourselves. What should we think of a person who, after accepting an invitation to a feast, and taking his place at the table, instead of partaking of the repast, amused himself with speculating on the nature of the provisions, or the manner in which they were prepared, and their adaptation to the temperament of the several guests, without tasting a single article? Such, however, is the conduct of those who hear the Word without applying it to themselves, or considering the aspect it bears on their individual character. Go to the house of God with a serious expectation and desire of meeting with something suited to your particular state; something that shall lay the axe to the root of your corruptions; mortify your easily-besetting sin, and confirm the graces in which you are most deficient. A little attention will be sufficient to

give you that insight into your character which will teach what you need; what the peculiar temptations to which you are exposed, and on what account you feel most shame and humiliation before God. Every one may know, if he pleases, the *plague* of his own heart. Keep your eye upon it while you are hearing, and eagerly lay hold upon what is best adapted to heal and correct it. Remember that religion is a personal thing, an individual concern; for every one of us must give an account of *himself* to God, and every man bear his own burden. *Is not my word as a fire,* saith the Lord, *and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* If such be its power and efficacy, lay your hearts open to it, and expose them fully to the stroke of the hammer, and the action of the fire. Do not imagine, because you are tolerably well acquainted with the system of the gospel, that you have therefore nothing to learn; and that your only obligation to attend its ministry arises from the necessity of setting an example. It is probable your knowledge is much more limited than you suppose; but if it be not, it is a great mistake to imagine the only advantage derived from hearing is the acquisition of new truths. There is a spiritual perception, infinitely more important than the knowledge which is merely speculative. The latter is at most but a means to the former, and this perception is not confined to new propositions. It is frequently, nay, most frequently, attached to truths already known; and, when they are faithfully and affectionately exhibited, they are the principal means of calling into action, and strengthening the habits of internal grace. Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin, and holy resolutions against it, are not promoted so much by novel speculations, as by placing in a just and affecting light the acknowledged truths of the gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. *Whilst I am in this tabernacle,* said Peter, *I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.* We appeal to the experience of every real christian, whether

the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking, but was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the gospel. As the Word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect among others—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety.

Sixthly. Hear with *candour*. The indulgence of a nice and fastidious taste is as adverse to the improvement of the hearer as it is to the comfort of the minister. Considering the variety of our avocations, the necessity we are under of addressing you in all states of mind, and sometimes on the most unexpected occasions, if we could not rely on your candour, our situation would be scarcely tolerable. Where the general tendency of a discourse is good, and the instruction delivered is weighty and solid, it is the part of candour to overlook imperfections in the composition, manner, or elocution of the speaker; imitating, in this respect, the example of the Galatians, of whom Paul testifies that they did not despise his temptation, which was in the flesh—some unhappy peculiarity in his speech or countenance, we may suppose, which exposed him to the derision of the unfeeling. The Lord, by the mouth of Isaiah, severely censures such as *make a man an offender for a word*, a fault too prevalent in many of our churches, especially among such as are the least informed and judicious; for the disposition to sit in judgement upon the orthodoxy of ministers is usually in an inverse proportion to the ability. Be not hasty in concluding that a preacher is erroneous because he may chance to use a word, or a phrase, not exactly suited to your taste and comprehension. It is very possible the idea it is intended to convey, may perfectly accord with your own sentiments; but, if it should not, it is equally possible the propriety of it may be vindicated by considerations with which you are not acquainted. *Be not many masters*, many teachers, saith St. James, *knowing*

ye shall receive the greater condemnation. Hear the word of God less in the spirit of judges than of those who shall be judged by it. If you are not conscious of your need of religious instruction, why elect pastors and teachers for that purpose? but, if ye are, how inconsistent is it to indulge that spirit of cavil and censure which can have no other effect than to deter your ministers from the faithful discharge of their office, from declaring the whole counsel of God! In most dissenting congregations, there are a few persons who value themselves on their skill in detecting the unsoundness of ministers; and who, when they hear a stranger, attend less with a view to spiritual improvement than to pass their verdict, which they expect shall be received as decisive. It is almost unnecessary to add, that they usually consist of the most ignorant, conceited, and irreligious part of the society. Such a disposition should, as much as possible, be discouraged and suppressed.

Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls. Despise not men of plain talents, who preach the truth, and appear to have your eternal welfare at heart. If you choose to converse with your fellow-christians on what you have been hearing, a practice which, if rightly conducted, may be very edifying, let your conversation turn more upon the tendency, the spiritual beauty and glory, of those great things of God which have engaged your attention, than on the merit of the preacher. We may readily suppose that Cornelius and his friends, after hearing Peter, employed very few words in discussing the oratorical talents of that great apostle; any more than the three thousand, who at the day of Pentecost were pricked to the heart: their minds were too much occupied by the momentous truths they had been listening to, to leave room for such reflections. Yet this is the only kind of religious conversation (if it deserve the appellation) in which too many professors engage. "Give me (says the incomparable Fenelon) the preacher who imbues my mind with such a love of the Word of God, as makes me desirous of hearing it from any mouth."

When your ministers are exposing a particular vice, and endeavouring to deter from it by the motives which reason and revelation supply, guard against a suspicion of their being *personal*. That they ought not to be so we readily admit; that is, that they ought not to descend to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall necessarily direct the attention to one or more individuals: but if they are not at liberty to point their arrows against particular vices among them, or are expected, lest they should wound, to make a courteous apology, by assuring the audience of their hope and conviction that none among them are implicated, they had better seal up their lips in perpetual silence. It is a most indispensable part of our office to warn sinners of every description; and, that we may "not beat the air," to attack particular sins, as well as sin in the abstract; and if, without our intending it, an individual suspects he is personally aimed at, he merely bears an involuntary testimony to our fidelity and skill.

Seventhly. Hear the Word with a sincere resolution of *obeying* it. *If ye know these things*, said our Lord, *happy are ye if ye do them.—He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a man who built his house upon a rock.* To be a forgetful hearer of the Word, and not a doer, is to forfeit all the advantages of the Christian dispensation, which is imparted solely with a view to practice. The doctrine of faith is published with a design to produce the obedience of faith in all nations. The doctrine of repentance is nothing more or less than the command of God, that all men every where should repent. If we are reminded that *he who in times past spoke to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son*, it is that we may be admonished not to *refuse* him that speaketh. If we are taught the supreme dignity and exaltation of Christ as a Mediator, it is that *every knee may bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.* If the apostles, having the mind of Christ, faithfully imparted it, it was that the same mind may be in us, to purify our passions, and regulate our conduct. We can scarcely imagine a greater impertinence than to hear the Word with apparent seriousness, without intending to comply with its directions. It is a solemn mockery, concealing, under an air of reverence and submission, a determination to rebel, and, in the language of the prophet, a heart bent on backsliding. To suppose the Supreme Being pleased with such a mode of attendance, is to impute to him a conduct which it would be an insult to ascribe to a fellow-creature; for who, but the weakest of mortals, under the character of a master or a sovereign, would be gratified with the profound and respectful attention with which his commands were heard, while there existed a fixed resolution not to obey? Remember, dear brethren, the practical tendency of every Christian doctrine: remember that the ministry of the gospel is the appointed instrument of forming the spirits of men to faith and obedience; and that, consequently, the utmost attention and assiduity in hearing it is fruitless and unavailing, which fails to produce that effect.

Finally. Be careful, after you have heard the Word, to *retain and perpetuate its impressions.* Meditate, retire, and digest it in your thoughts; turn it into prayer; in a word, spare no pains to fasten it upon your hearts. You have read, dear brethren, of those *to whom the gospel was preached, as well as to us, but the Word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* Endeavour to exert upon it distinct and vigorous acts of faith, and thereby to mingle and incorporate it with all the powers of the mind, and all the springs of action. But this you can never accomplish without deep and serious reflection; for want of which it is too often left loose and exposed, like uncovered seed, which the fowls of heaven easily pick up and devour. *Then cometh that wicked one*, says our Lord, *and taketh it out of his heart, and he becometh unfruitful.* How many hearers, by engaging in worldly conversation, or giving way to a vain and unprofitable train of thought, when they leave the sanctuary, lose the impressions they had received, instead of conducting themselves like persons who have just been put in possession of a treasure which they are anxious to secure from depredation! If Satan watches for an oppor-

tunity of taking the Word out of our hearts, what remains but that we oppose vigilance to vigilance, and effort to effort? and since the prize contended for, by the powers of darkness, is our souls, what a melancholy reflection it will be, if the disinterested malice of our enemies renders them vigilant and active in seeking their destruction, while we are careless and negligent in seeking their salvation! Satan, conscious that the Word of God is capable of elevating us to that pinnacle of happiness whence he fell, contemplates its success with alarm, and spares no artifice or stratagem, which his capacious intellect can suggest, to obstruct its progress; and if we, by our criminal negligence, turn his ally against ourselves, we shall be guilty of that prodigy of folly and infatuation which is equally condemned by the councils of heaven and the machinations of hell.

END OF VOL. I.

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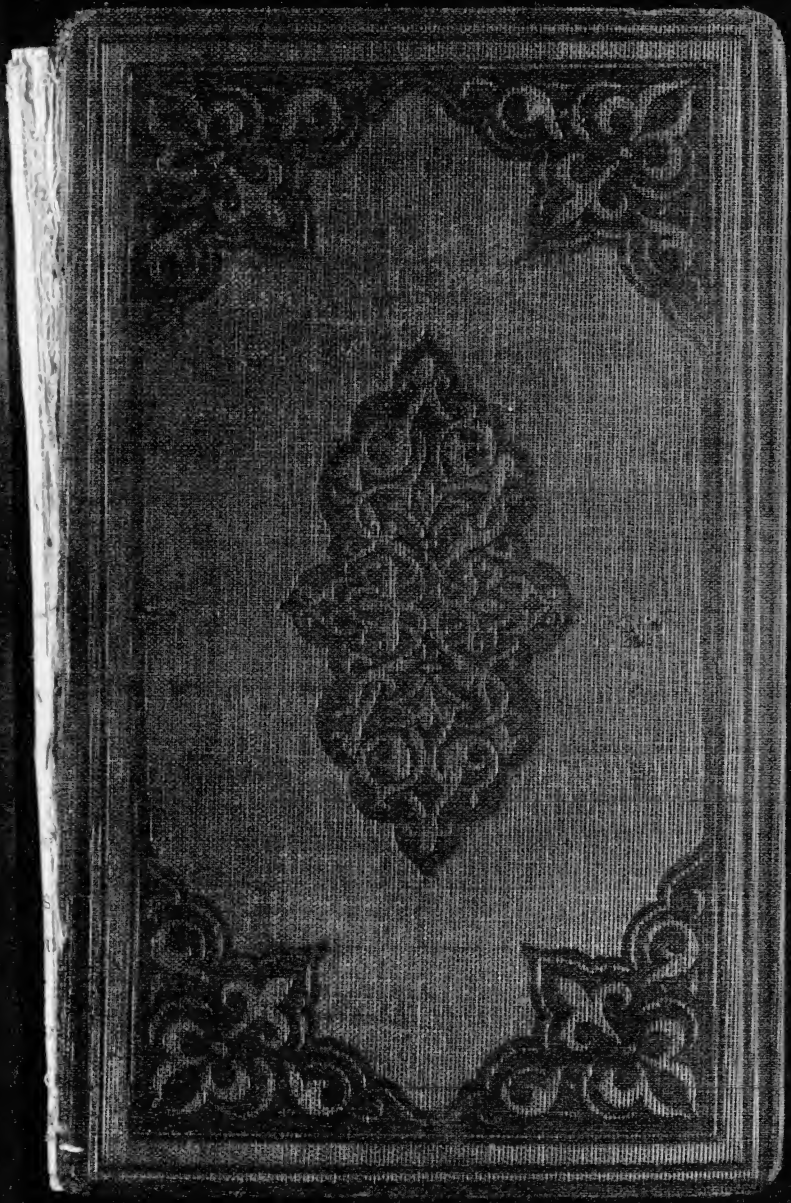

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WORKS

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Originally published in Six Volumes, 8vo.

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.

LATE PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

SERMONS AND CHARGES.

	Page
MODERN INFIDELITY CONSIDERED	1
Preface	3
Note by the Editor	9
Sermon	13
Note	59
REFLECTIONS ON WAR	61
Preface	63
Sermon	65
Account of the Cambridge Benevolent Society	91
THE SENTIMENTS PROPER TO THE PRESENT CRISIS	95
Advertisement	97
Preface to the Second Edition	98
Sermon	103
THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER CLASSES	145
Advertisement	147
Sermon	149
ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS AND SUPPORTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER	165
Preface	167
Discourse	171
AN ADDRESS TO THE REV. EUSTACE CAREY, ON HIS DESIGNATION AS A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY TO INDIA	203

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CONTENTS.

ARTICLES FROM THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

	Page
Foster's Essays	235
Custance on the Constitution	259
Zeal without Innovation	266
Gisborne's Sermons	321
Gregory's Letters	334
Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey	365
Birt on Popery	391

MODERN INFIDELITY CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY:

IN

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE,

IN NOVEMBER, 1799.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.
St Paul.

Sunt qui in fortunæ jam casibus omnia ponant,
Et nullo credant mundum rectore moveri,
Natura volvente vices et lucis et anni;
Atque ideo intrepidi quæcunque altaria tangunt.
Juv.

PREFACE.

THE author knows not whether it be necessary to apologize for the extraordinary length of this sermon, which so much exceeds the usual limits of public discourses; for it is only for the reader to conceive (by a fiction of the imagination, if he pleases so to consider it) that the patience of his audience indulged him with their attention during its delivery. The fact is, not being in the habit of writing his sermons, this discourse was not committed to paper till after it was delivered: so that the phraseology may probably vary, and the bulk be somewhat extended: but the substance is certainly retained.

He must crave the indulgence of the religious public, for having blended so little *theology* with it. He is fully aware that the chief attention of a christian minister should be occupied in explaining the doctrines, and enforcing the duties, of genuine christianity. Nor is he chargeable, he hopes, in the exercise of his public functions, with any remarkable deviation from this rule of conduct: yet he is equally convinced, excursions into

other topics are sometimes both lawful and necessary. The versatility of error demands a correspondent variety in the methods of defending truth: and from whom have the public more right to expect its defence, in opposition to the encroachments of error and infidelity, than from those who profess to devote their studies and their lives to the advancement of virtue and religion? Accordingly, a multitude of publications on these subjects, equally powerful in argument, and impressive in manner, have issued from divines of different persuasions, which must be allowed to have done the utmost honour to the clerical profession. The most luminous statements of the evidences of christianity, on historical grounds, have been made; the petulant cavils of infidels satisfactorily refuted; and their ignorance, if not put to shame, at least amply exposed: so that revelation, as far as truth and reason can prevail, is on all sides triumphant.

There is one point of view, however, in which the respective systems remain to be examined, which, though hitherto little considered, is forced upon our attention by the present conduct of our adversaries; that is, their *influence on society*. The controversy appears to have taken a new turn. The advocates of infidelity, baffled in the field of argument, though unwilling to relinquish the contest, have changed their mode of attack; and seem less disposed to impugn the authority, than to supersede the use, of revealed religion, by giving such representations of man and of society as are calculated to make its sanctions appear unreasonable and unnecessary. Their aim is not so much to discredit the pretensions of any particular religion as to set aside the principles common to all.

To obliterate the sense of Deity, of moral sanctions, and a future world; and by these means to prepare the way for the total subversion of every institution, both social and religious, which men have been hitherto accustomed to revere, is evidently the principal object of modern sceptics; the first sophists who have avowed an attempt to govern the world, without inculcating the persuasion of a superior power. It might well excite our surprise to behold an effort to shake off the yoke of religion, which was totally unknown during the prevalence of gross superstition, reserved for a period of the world distinguished from every other by the possession of a revelation more pure, more perfect, and better authenticated, than the enlightened sages of antiquity ever ventured to anticipate, were we not fully persuaded the immaculate holiness of this revelation is precisely that which renders it disgusting to men who are determined at all events to retain their vices. Our Saviour furnishes the solution:—*They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; neither will they come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.*

While all the religions, the Jewish excepted, which, previous to the promulgation of christianity, prevailed in the world, partly the contrivance of human policy, partly the offspring of ignorant fear, mixed with the mutilated remains of traditionary revelation, were favourable to the indulgence of some vices, and but feebly restrained the practice of others; betwixt vice of every sort and in every

degree, and the religion of Jesus, there subsists an irreconcilable enmity, an eternal discord. The dominion of christianity being, in the very essence of it, the dominion of virtue, we need look no further for the sources of hostility in any who oppose it, than their attachment to vice and disorder.

This view of the controversy, if it be just, demonstrates its supreme importance; and furnishes the strongest plea, with every one with whom it is not a matter of indifference whether vice or virtue, delusion or truth, govern the world, to exert his talents, in whatever proportion they are possessed, in *contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.* In such a crisis, is it not best for christians of all denominations, that they may better concentrate their forces against the common adversary, to suspend for the present their internal disputes; imitating the policy of wise states, who have never failed to consider the invasion of an enemy as a signal for terminating the contests of party? Internal peace is the best fruit we can reap from external danger. The momentous contest at issue betwixt the christian church and infidels may instruct us how trivial, for the most part, are the controversies of its members with each other; and that the different ceremonies, opinions, and practices, by which they are distinguished, correspond to the variety of feature and complexion discernible in the offspring of the same parent, among whom there subsists the greatest family likeness. May it please God so to dispose the minds of christians of every visible church and community, *that Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, nor Judah*

Ephraim; that the only rivalry felt in future may be, who shall most advance the interests of our common christianity; and the only provocation sustained, that of *provoking each other to love and good works!* When, at the distance of more than half a century, christianity was assaulted by a *Woolston*, a *Tindal*, and a *Morgan*, it was ably supported, both by clergymen of the established church, and writers among protestant dissenters. The labours of a *Clarke* and a *Butler* were associated with those of a *Doddridge*, a *Leland*, and a *Lardner*, with such equal reputation and success, as to make it evident that the intrinsic excellence of religion needs not the aid of external appendages; but that, with or without a dowry, her charms are of sufficient power to fix and engage the heart.

The writer of this discourse will feel himself happy, should his example stimulate any of his brethren, of superior abilities, to contribute their exertions in so good a cause. His apology for not entering more at large into the proofs of the being of a God,* and the evidences of Christianity,† is, that these subjects have been already

* See an excellent sermon on Atheism, by the Rev. Mr. Estlin, of Bristol, at whose meeting the substance of this discourse was first preached. In the sermon referred to, the argument for the existence of a Deity is stated with the utmost clearness and precision; and the sophistry of Dupuis, a French infidel, refuted in a very satisfactory manner.

† It is almost superfluous to name a work so universally known as Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, which is probably, without exception, the most clear and satisfactory statement of the historical proofs of the christian religion ever exhibited in any age or country.

handled with great ability by various writers; and that he wished rather to confine himself to one view of the subject—The total incompatibility of sceptical principles with the existence of society. Should his life be spared, he may probably, at some future time, enter into a fuller and more particular examination of the infidel philosophy, both with respect to its speculative principles, and its practical effects; its influence on society, and on the individual. In the mean time he humbly consecrates this discourse to the honour of that Saviour, who, when the means of a more liberal offering are wanting, commends the widow's mite.

CAMBRIDGE,
January 18, 1800.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

NOTHING can be more erroneous than the idea, entertained by a few persons, that Mr. Hall recited his sermons *memoriter*, from the study of a previously written composition. His eloquence was the spontaneous result of his vigorous and richly stored intellect, and needed not the aid of the usual expedients of men of ordinary mind. There is great reason to believe that, during the entire extent of his ministry, he only committed one sermon to memory from a previously composed manuscript, and that was the second in this volume, "Reflections on War." It was preached on a day of thanksgiving, at the termination of a long and dreadful war; it was a publicly announced sermon, to aid the funds of a benevolent society; persons of different religious and political sentiments were expected to be assembled, at a time when the violent party-feelings excited by the French Revolution of 1789 had been but little subsided; and Mr. Hall, afraid of yielding to his own emotions on such an occasion, and perhaps of disturbing the feelings of harmony which it was hoped would prevail, thought it advisable for once to deviate from his usual course. That course was, very briefly to sketch, commonly upon a sheet of letter paper, (in some cases rather more fully,) the plan of the proposed discourse, marking the divisions, specifying a few texts, and sometimes writing the first sentence; or, occasionally, a few other sentences, especially in those parts where an argument could not be adequately stated without great technical correctness of language. This he regarded

as " digging a channel for his thoughts to flow in." Then, calling into exercise the power of abstraction, which he possessed in a degree I never saw equalled, he would, whether alone or not, pursue his trains of thought, retrace and extend them, until the whole were engraven on his mind; and, when once so fixed in their entire connexion, they were never after obliterated. The result was on all occasions the same; so that without recurring to the ordinary expedients, or loading his memory with words and phrases, he uniformly brought his mind, with an unburdened vigour and elasticity, to bear upon its immediate purpose, recalling the selected train of thought, and communicating it to others, in diction the most felicitous, appropriate, and impressive. This was uniformly the case with regard to the tenour and substance of his discourses; but the most striking and impressive passages were often, strictly speaking, extemporaneous.

On various occasions I have ascertained the correctness of his recollection as to trains of thought and matters of arrangement. Thus, on drawing his attention fully to an interesting conversation which occurred nearly thirty years before, he has given as vivid and graphic a sketch of the persons present, their positions in the room, and of the main topics discussed, as though all had occurred in the preceding week. So again, with respect to sermons preached early in the present century, and which seemed to have entirely escaped from his recollection; when a reference to some illustration, or the mode of treating some subsidiary topic, has supplied the adequate clew, he has accurately described the plan, the reasoning, the object of the discourse, the illustrations employed, the principal texts adduced, &c., dwelling especially, as was always most natural to him, upon the parts that he regarded as defective.

The history of the following sermon, on " Modern Infidelity," may serve still further to illustrate the peculiar structure of Mr. Hall's intellect. He preached it first at Bristol, in October, 1799, and again at Cambridge early in the month

of November. Having yielded to the solicitations of his friends, and consented to its publication, there remained two difficulties, that of writing down the sermon (of which not a single sentence was upon paper), and that of superintending the press. I, who then resided at Cambridge, offered to undertake both these, provided he would engage not to go farther than ten miles from Cambridge, and allow me to follow him, wherever he went, to obtain " copy," as it should be needed. He acceded to that part of the arrangement which related to the printing; but would not consent that I should be his amanuensis on that occasion. The writing, therefore, he undertook himself, but with great reluctance, on account of the severe pain which even then (and, indeed, much earlier) he experienced when remaining long in a sitting posture. The work, in consequence, proceeded slowly, and with many interruptions. At first I obtained from him eight pages, and took them to the printer; after a few days, four pages more; then two or three pages; then a more violent attack of his distressing pain in the back compelled him to write two or three pages *while lying on the floor;* and soon afterwards a still more violent paroxysm occasioned a longer suspension of his labour. After an interval of a week, the work was renewed at the joint entreaty of myself and other friends. It was pursued in the same manner, two or three pages being obtained for the printer at one time, a similar portion after a day or two, until, at the end of seven weeks, the task was completed. During the whole time of the composition, thus conducted, Mr. Hall never saw a single page of the printer's work. When I applied for more " copy," he asked what it was that he had written last, and then proceeded. Very often, after he had given me a small portion, he would inquire if he had written it nearly in the words which he had employed in delivering the sermon orally. After he had written down the striking apostrophe which occurs at page 52, of the present edition— " Eternal God! on what are thine enemies intent! what are

those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not *penetrate!*"—he asked, "Did I say *penetrate*, Sir, when I preached it?" "Yes." "Do you think, Sir, I may venture to alter it? for no man who considered the force of the English language would use a word of three syllables there, but from absolute necessity." "You are doubtless at liberty to alter it, if you think well." "Then be so good, Sir, to take your pencil, and for *penetrate* put *pierce; pierce* is the word, Sir, and the only word to be used there." I have now the evidence of this before me, in the entire manuscript, which I carefully preserve among my richest literary treasures.

At the end of seven weeks Mr. Hall's labour, thus conducted, being, greatly to his delight, brought to a close, I presented him with a complete copy of his printed sermon, *not one word* of which he had seen in its progress.

During this interval, he had preached at least twenty times, had paid his pastoral visits, as usual, had been often in the society of the literary men with whom he then associated, and had, with all his characteristic ardour, carried on, simultaneously, two distinct courses of reading.

I mistake greatly, if, after the perusal of this simple narrative, the reader will not turn to the sermon with additional relish, and meditate with augmented pleasure upon the peculiarities of this most valuable production, and the singular character of its author's mind.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.
June 1, 1831.

A SERMON.

EPHES. ii. 12.

Without God in the world.

As the christian ministry is established for the instruction of men, throughout every age, in truth and holiness, it must adapt itself to the ever-shifting scenes of the moral world, and stand ready to repel the attacks of impiety and error, under whatever form they may appear. The church and the world constitute two societies so distinct, and are governed by such opposite principles and maxims, that, as well from this contrariety, as from the express warnings of scripture, true christians must look for a state of warfare, with this consoling assurance, that the church, like the burning bush beheld by Moses in the land of Midian, may be encompassed with flames, but will never be consumed.

When she was delivered from the persecuting power of Rome, she only experienced a change of trials. The oppression of external violence was followed by the more dangerous and insidious attacks of internal enemies. The freedom of inquiry claimed and asserted at the reformation, degenerated, in the hands of men who professed the principles without possessing the spirit of the reformers, into a fondness for speculative refinements; and consequently into a source of dispute, faction, and heresy. While protestants attended more to the points on which they differed than to those on which they agreed; while more zeal was employed in settling ceremonies and defending subtleties, than in enforcing plain revealed truths; the lovely fruits of peace and charity perished under the storms of controversy.

In this disjointed and disordered state of the christian church, they who never looked into the interior of christianity were apt to suspect, that to a subject so fruitful in particular disputes must attach a general uncertainty; and that a religion founded on revelation could never have occasioned such discordancy of principle and practice among its disciples. Thus infidelity is the joint offspring of an irreligious temper, and unholy speculation, employed, not in examining the evidences of christianity, but in detecting the vices and imperfections of professing christians. It has passed through various stages, each distinguished by higher gradations of impiety; for when men arrogantly abandon their guide, and wilfully shut their eyes on the light of heaven, it is wisely ordained that their errors shall multiply at every step, until their extravagance confutes itself, and the mischief of their principles works its own antidote. That such has been the progress of infidelity will be obvious from a slight survey of its history.

Lord HERBERT, the first and purest of our English free-thinkers, who flourished in the beginning of the reign of Charles the First, did not so much impugn the doctrine or the morality of the Scriptures, as attempt to supersede their necessity, by endeavouring to show that the great principles of the unity of God—a moral government, and a future world—are taught with sufficient clearness by the light of nature. BOLINGBROKE, and some of his successors, advanced much farther, and attempted to invalidate the proofs of the moral character of the Deity, and consequently all expectations of rewards and punishments; leaving the Supreme Being no other perfections than those which belong to a first cause, or almighty contriver. After him, at a considerable distance, followed HUME, the most subtle, if not the most philosophical of the deists; who, by perplexing the relations of cause and effect, boldly aimed to introduce an universal scepticism, and to pour a more than Egyptian darkness into the whole region of morals. Since his time sceptical writers have sprung up in abundance, and infidelity has allured multitudes to its

standard: the young and the superficial by its dexterous sophistry, the vain by the literary reputation of its champions, and the profligate by the licentiousness of its principles. Atheism, the most undisguised, has at length begun to make its appearance.

Animated by numbers, and emboldened by success, the infidels of the present day have given a new direction to their efforts, and impressed a new character on the ever-growing mass of their impious speculations.

By uniting more closely with each other, by giving a sprinkling of irreligion to all their literary productions, they aim to engross the formation of the public mind; and, amidst the warmest professions of attachment to virtue, to effect an entire disruption of morality from religion. Pretending to be the teachers of virtue, and the guides of life, they propose to revolutionize the morals of mankind; to regenerate the world by a process entirely new; and to rear the temple of virtue, not merely without the aid of religion, but on the renunciation of its principles, and the derision of its sanctions. Their party has derived a great accession of numbers and strength from events the most momentous and astonishing in the political world, which have divided the sentiments of Europe betwixt hope and terror; and which, however they may issue, have, for the present, swelled the ranks of infidelity. So rapidly, indeed, has it advanced since this crisis, that a great majority on the continent, and in England a considerable proportion of those who pursue literature as a profession,* may justly be considered as the open or disguised abettors of atheism.

With respect to the sceptical and religious systems, the inquiry at present is not so much which is the truest in speculation, as which is the most useful in practice; or, in other words, whether morality will be best promoted by considering it as a part of a great and comprehensive law, emanating from the will of a supreme, omnipotent legislator; or as a mere expedient, adapted to our pre-

* By those who pursue literature as a profession, the author would be understood to mean that numerous class of literary men who draw their principal subsistence from their writings.

sent situation, enforced by no other motives than those which arise from the prospects and interests of the present state. The absurdity of atheism having been demonstrated so often and so clearly by many eminent men, that this part of the subject is exhausted, I should hasten immediately to what I have more particularly in view, were I not apprehensive a discourse of this kind may be expected to contain some statement of the argument in proof of a Deity; which, therefore, I shall present in as few and plain words as possible.

When we examine a watch, or any other piece of machinery, we instantly perceive marks of design. The arrangement of its several parts, and the adaptation of its movements to one result, show it to be a contrivance; nor do we ever imagine the faculty of contriving to be in the watch itself, but in a separate agent. If we turn from art to nature, we behold a vast magazine of contrivances; we see innumerable objects replete with the most exquisite design. The human eye, for example, is formed with admirable skill for the purpose of sight, the ear for the function of hearing. As in the productions of art we never think of ascribing the power of contrivance to the machine itself, so we are certain the skill displayed in the human structure is not a property of man, since he is very imperfectly acquainted with his own formation. If there be an inseparable relation betwixt the ideas of a contrivance and a contriver; and it be evident, in regard to the human structure, the designing agent is not man himself, there must undeniably be some separate invisible being, who is his former. This great Being we mean to indicate by the appellation of Deity.

This reasoning admits but of one reply. Why, it will be said, may we not suppose the world has been always continued as it is; that is, that there has been a constant succession of finite beings, appearing and disappearing on the earth from all eternity? I answer, Whatever is supposed to have occasioned this constant succession, exclusive of an intelligent cause, will never account for the undeniable marks of design visible in all finite beings. Nor is the absurdity of supposing a contrivance without

a contriver diminished by this imaginary succession; but rather increased, by being repeated at every step of the series.

Besides, an eternal succession of finite beings involves in it a contradiction, and is therefore plainly impossible. As the supposition is made to get quit of the idea of any one having existed from eternity, each of the beings in the succession must have begun in time: but the succession itself is eternal. We have then the succession of beings infinitely earlier than any being in the succession; or, in other words, a series of beings running on, *ad infinitum*, before it reached any particular being, which is absurd.

From these considerations it is manifest there must be some eternal Being, or nothing could ever have existed: and since the beings which we behold bear in their whole structure evident marks of wisdom and design, it is equally certain that he who formed them is a wise and intelligent agent.

To prove the unity of this great Being, in opposition to a plurality of gods, it is not necessary to have recourse to metaphysical abstractions. It is sufficient to observe, that the notion of more than one author of nature is inconsistent with that harmony of design which pervades her works; that it explains no appearances, is supported by no evidence, and serves no purpose but to embarrass and perplex our conceptions.

Such are the proofs of the existence of that great and glorious Being whom we denominate God; and it is not presumption to say, it is impossible to find another truth in the whole compass of morals, which, according to the justest laws of reasoning, admits of such strict and rigorous demonstration.

But I proceed to the more immediate object of this discourse, which, as has been already intimated, is not so much to evince the falsehood of scepticism as a theory, as to display its mischievous effects, contrasted with those which result from the belief of a Deity, and a future state. The subject, viewed in this light, may be considered under two aspects; the influence of the

opposite systems on the principles of morals, and on the formation of character. The first may be styled their direct, the latter their equally important, but indirect consequence and tendency.

I. The sceptical, or irreligious system, subverts the whole foundation of morals. It may be assumed as a maxim, that no person can be required to act contrarily to his greatest good, or his highest interest, comprehensively viewed in relation to the whole duration of his being. It is often our duty to forego our own interest *partially*, to sacrifice a smaller pleasure for the sake of a greater, to incur a present evil in pursuit of a distant good of more consequence. In a word, to arbitrate amongst interfering claims of inclination is the moral arithmetic of human life. But to risk the happiness of the whole duration of our being in any case whatever, were it possible, would be foolish; because the sacrifice must, by the nature of it, be so great as to preclude the possibility of compensation.

As the present world, on sceptical principles, is the only place of recompence, whenever the practice of virtue fails to promise the greatest sum of present good, (cases which often occur in reality, and much oftener in appearance,) every motive to virtuous conduct is superseded; a deviation from rectitude becomes the part of wisdom; and, should the path of virtue, in addition to this, be obstructed by disgrace, torment, or death, to persevere would be madness and folly, and a violation of the first and most essential law of nature. Virtue, on these principles, being in numberless instances at war with self-preservation, never can, or ought to become, a fixed habit of the mind.

The system of infidelity is not only incapable of arming virtue for great and trying occasions, but leaves it unsupported in the most ordinary occurrences. In vain will its advocates appeal to a moral sense, to benevolence and sympathy; for it is undeniable that these impulses may be overcome. In vain will they expatiate on the tranquillity and pleasure attendant on a virtuous course:

for though you may remind the offender that in disregarding them he has violated his nature, and that a conduct consistent with them is productive of much internal satisfaction; yet if he reply that his taste is of a different sort, that there are other gratifications which he values more, and that every man must choose his own pleasures, the argument is at an end.

Rewards and punishments, assigned by infinite power, afford a palpable and pressing motive which can never be neglected without renouncing the character of a rational creature: but tastes and relishes are not to be prescribed.

A motive in which the reason of man shall acquiesce, enforcing the practice of virtue at all times and seasons, enters into the very essence of moral obligation. Modern infidelity supplies no such motives: it is therefore essentially and infallibly a system of enervation, turpitude, and vice.

This chasm in the construction of morals can only be supplied by the firm belief of a rewarding and avenging Deity, who binds duty and happiness, though they may seem distant, in an indissoluble chain; without which whatever usurps the name of virtue, is not a principle, but a feeling; not a determinate rule, but a fluctuating expedient, varying with the tastes of individuals, and changing with the scenes of life.

Nor is this the only way in which infidelity subverts the foundation of morals. All reasoning on morals presupposes a distinction between inclinations and duties, affections and rules. The former prompt, the latter prescribe. The former supply motives to action; the latter regulate and control it. Hence it is evident, if virtue have any just claim to authority, it must be under the latter of these notions, that is, under the character of a law. It is under this notion, *in fact*, that its dominion has ever been acknowledged to be paramount and supreme.

But without the intervention of a superior will, it is impossible there should be any moral laws, except in the lax metaphorical sense in which we speak of the laws of matter and motion. Men being essentially equal, morality

is, on these principles, only a stipulation, or silent compact, into which every individual is supposed to enter, as far as suits his convenience, and for the breach of which he is accountable to nothing but his own mind. His own mind is his law, his tribunal, and his judge!

Two consequences, the most disastrous to society, will inevitably follow the general prevalence of this system;—the frequent perpetration of great crimes, and the total absence of great virtues.

1. In those conjunctures which tempt avarice or inflame ambition, when a crime flatters with the prospect of impunity, and the certainty of immense advantage, what is to restrain an atheist from its commission? To say that remorse will deter him is absurd; for remorse, as distinguished from pity, is the sole offspring of religious belief, the extinction of which is the great purpose of the infidel philosophy.

The dread of punishment or infamy, from his fellow-creatures, will be an equally ineffectual barrier; because crimes are only committed under such circumstances as suggest the hope of concealment: not to say that crimes themselves will soon lose their infamy and their horror, under the influence of that system which destroys the sanctity of virtue, by converting it into a low calculation of worldly interest. Here the sense of an ever-present Ruler, and of an avenging Judge, is of the most awful and indispensable necessity; as it is that alone which impresses on all crimes the character of *folly*, shows that duty and interest in every instance coincide, and that the most prosperous career of vice, the most brilliant successes of criminality, are but an *accumulation of wrath against the day of wrath*.

As the frequent perpetration of great crimes is an inevitable consequence of the diffusion of sceptical principles; so, to understand this consequence in its full extent, we must look beyond their immediate effects, and consider the disruption of social ties, the destruction of confidence, the terror, suspicion, and hatred, which must prevail in that state of society in which barbarous deeds are familiar. The tranquillity which pervades a

well-ordered community, and the mutual good offices which bind its members together, are founded on an implied confidence in the indisposition to annoy; in the justice, humanity, and moderation of those among whom we dwell. So that the worst consequence of crimes is, that they impair the stock of public charity and general tenderness. The dread and hatred of our species would infallibly be grafted on a conviction that we were exposed every moment to the surges of an unbridled ferocity, and that nothing but the power of the magistrate stood between us and the daggers of assassins. In such a state, laws, deriving no support from public manners, are unequal to the task of curbing the fury of the passions; which, from being concentrated into selfishness, fear, and revenge, acquire new force. Terror and suspicion beget cruelty, and inflict injuries by way of prevention. Pity is extinguished in the stronger impulse of self-preservation. The tender and generous affections are crushed; and nothing is seen but the retaliation of wrongs, and the fierce and unmitigated struggle for superiority. This is but a faint sketch of the incalculable calamities and horrors we must expect, should we be so unfortunate as ever to witness the triumph of modern infidelity.

2. This system is a soil as barren of great and sublime virtues as it is prolific in crimes. By great and sublime virtues are meant, those which are called into action on great and trying occasions, which demand the sacrifice of the dearest interests and prospects of human life, and sometimes of life itself: the virtues, in a word, which, by their rarity and splendour, draw admiration, and have rendered illustrious the character of patriots, martyrs, and confessors. It requires but little reflection to perceive, that whatever veils a future world, and contracts the limits of existence within the present life, must tend, in a proportionable degree, to diminish the grandeur and narrow the sphere of human agency.

As well might you expect exalted sentiments of justice from a professed gamester, as look for noble principles in the man whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present moment, and who stakes the whole hap-

piness of his being on the events of this vain and fleeting life. If he be ever impelled to the performance of great achievements in a good cause, it must be solely by the hope of fame; a motive which, besides that it makes virtue the servant of opinion, usually grows weaker at the approach of death; and which, however it may surmount the love of existence in the heat of battle, or in the moment of public observation, can seldom be expected to operate with much force on the retired duties of a private station.

In affirming that infidelity is unfavourable to the higher class of virtues, we are supported as well by facts as by reasoning. We should be sorry to load our adversaries with unmerited reproach: but to what history, to what record will they appeal for the traits of moral greatness exhibited by their disciples? Where shall we look for the trophies of infidel magnanimity, or atheistical virtue? Not that we mean to accuse them of inactivity: they have recently filled the world with the fame of their exploits; exploits of a different kind indeed, but of imperishable memory, and disastrous lustre.

Though it is confessed great and splendid actions are not the ordinary employment of life, but must, from their nature, be reserved for high and eminent occasions; yet that system is essentially defective which leaves no room for their production. They are important, both from their immediate advantage and their remoter influence. They often save, and always illustrate, the age and nation in which they appear. They raise the standard of morals; they arrest the progress of degeneracy; they diffuse a lustre over the path of life: monuments of the greatness of the human soul, they present to the world the august image of virtue in her sublimest form, from which streams of light and glory issue to remote times and ages; while their commemoration, by the pens of historians and poets, awakens in distant bosoms the sparks of kindred excellence.

Combine the frequent and familiar perpetration of atrocious deeds with the dearth of great and generous actions, and you have the exact picture of that condition

of society which completes the degradation of the species —the frightful contrast of dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices, where every thing good is mean and little, and every thing evil is rank and luxuriant: a dead and sickening uniformity prevails, broken only at intervals by volcanic eruptions of anarchy and crime.

II. Hitherto we have considered the influence of scepticism on the principles of virtue; and have endeavoured to show that it despoils it of its dignity, and lays its authority in the dust. Its influence on the formation of character remains to be examined. The actions of men are oftener determined by their character than their interest; their conduct takes its colour more from their acquired taste, inclinations, and habits, than from a deliberate regard to their greatest good. It is only on great occasions the mind awakes to take an extended survey of her whole course, and that she suffers the dictates of reason to impress a new bias upon her movements. The actions of each day are, for the most part, links which follow each other in the chain of custom. Hence the great effort of practical wisdom is to imbue the mind with right tastes, affections, and habits; the elements of character, and masters of action.

1. The exclusion of a supreme Being, and of a superintending Providence, tends directly to the destruction of moral taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence, even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable raptures in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an almighty Parent: in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step, to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.

When we reflect on the manner in which the idea of Deity is formed, we must be convinced that such an idea

intimately present to the mind, must have a most powerful effect in refining the moral taste. Composed of the richest elements, it embraces in the character of a beneficent Parent and almighty Ruler, whatever is venerable in wisdom, whatever is awful in authority, whatever is touching in goodness.

Human excellence is blended with many imperfections, and seen under many limitations. It is beheld only in detached and separate portions, nor ever appears in any one character whole and entire. So that when, in imitation of the Stoics, we wish to form out of these fragments the notion of a perfectly wise and good man, we know it is a mere fiction of the mind, without any real being in whom it is embodied and realized. In the belief of a Deity, these conceptions are reduced to reality: the scattered rays of an ideal excellence are concentrated, and become the real attributes of that Being with whom we stand in the nearest relation, who sits supreme at the head of the universe, is armed with infinite power, and pervades all nature with his presence.

The efficacy of these views in producing and augmenting a virtuous taste, will indeed be proportioned to the vividness with which they are formed, and the frequency with which they recur; yet some benefit will not fail to result from them even in their lowest degree.

The idea of the Supreme Being has this peculiar property; that, as it admits of no substitute, so from the first moment it is formed, it is capable of continual growth and enlargement. God himself is immutable; but our conception of his character is continually receiving fresh accessions, is continually growing more extended and refulgent, by having transferred to it new elements of beauty and goodness; by attracting to itself, as a centre, whatever bears the impress of dignity, order, or happiness. It borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe.

As the object of worship will always be, in a degree, the object of imitation, hence arises a fixed standard of moral excellence; by the contemplation of which the

tendencies to corruption are counteracted, the contagion of bad example is checked, and human nature rises above its natural level.

When the knowledge of God was lost in the world, just ideas of virtue and moral obligation disappeared along with it. How is it to be otherwise accounted for, that in the polished nations, and in the enlightened times, of pagan antiquity, the most unnatural lusts and detestable impurities were not only tolerated in private life,* but entered into religion, and formed a material part of public worship;† while among the Jews, a people so much inferior in every other branch of knowledge, the same vices were regarded with horror?

The reason is this: The true character of God was unknown to the former, which by the light of divine revelation was displayed to the latter. The former cast their deities in the mould of their own imaginations, in consequence of which they partook of the vices and defects of their worshippers. To the latter no scope was left for the wanderings of fancy; but a pure and perfect model was prescribed.

False and corrupt, however, as was the religion of the pagans (if it deserve the name), and defective, and often vicious, as was the character of their imaginary deities, it was still better for the world that the void should be filled up with these than abandoned to a total scepticism; for if both systems are equally false, they are not equally

* It is worthy of observation, that the elegant and philosophic Xenophon, in delineating the model of a perfect prince in the character of Cyrus, introduces a Mede who had formed an unnatural passion for his hero; and relates the incident in a lively, festive humour, without being in the least conscious of any indelicacy attached to it. What must be the state of manners in a country where a circumstance of this kind, feigned, no doubt, by way of ornament, finds a place in such a work? *Cyri Instit.* lib. i.

"Deinde nobis, qui, *concedentibus philosophis antiquis*, adolescentulis delectamur, etiam vitia sæpe jucunda sunt." *Cicero De Nat. Dei*, lib. i.

† "——*Nam quo non prostat fœmina templo?*" Juv.

The impurities practised in the worship of Isis, an Egyptian deity, rose to such a height in the reign of Tiberius, that that profligate prince thought fit to prohibit her worship, and at the same time inflicted on her priests the punishment of crucifixion. *Joseph. Antiq. Judaic.* lib. xviii.

pernicious. When the fictions of heathenism consecrated the memory of its legislators and heroes, it invested them for the most part with those qualities which were in the greatest repute. They were supposed to possess in the highest degree the virtues in which it was most honourable to excel; and to be the witnesses, approvers, and patrons of those perfections in others, by which their own character was chiefly distinguished. Men saw, or rather fancied they saw, in these supposed deities, the qualities they most admired, dilated to a larger size, moving in a higher sphere, and associated with the power, dignity, and happiness of superior natures. With such ideal models before them, and conceiving themselves continually acting under the eye of such spectators and judges, they felt a real elevation; their eloquence became more impassioned, their patriotism inflamed, and their courage exalted.

Revelation, by displaying the true character of God, affords a pure and perfect standard of virtue; heathenism, one in many respects defective and vicious; the fashionable scepticism of the present day, which excludes the belief of all superior powers, affords no standard at all. Human nature knows nothing better or higher than itself. All above and around it being shrouded in darkness, and the prospect confined to the tame realities of life, virtue has no room upwards to expand; nor are any excursions permitted into that unseen world, the true element of the great and good, by which it is fortified with motives equally calculated to satisfy the reason, to delight the fancy, and to impress the heart.

2. Modern infidelity not only tends to corrupt the moral taste; it also promotes the growth of those vices which are the most hostile to social happiness. Of all the vices incident to human nature, the most destructive to society are vanity, ferocity, and unbridled sensuality; and these are precisely the vices which infidelity is calculated to cherish.

That the love, fear, and habitual contemplation of a Being infinitely exalted, or, in other words, devotion, is adapted to promote a sober and moderate estimate of our own excellencies, is incontestable; nor is it less evident that the exclusion of such sentiments must be favourable to pride. The criminality of pride will, perhaps, be less readily admitted; for though there is no vice so opposite to the spirit of christianity, yet there is none which, even in the christian world, has, under various pretences, been treated with so much indulgence.

There is, it will be confessed, a delicate sensibility to character, a sober desire of reputation, a wish to possess the esteem of the wise and good, felt by the purest minds, which is at the farthest remove from arrogance or vanity. The humility of a noble mind scarcely dares to approve of itself, until it has secured the approbation of others. Very different is that restless desire of distinction, that passion for theatrical display, which inflames the heart and occupies the whole attention of vain men. This, of all the passions, is the most unsocial, avarice itself not excepted. The reason is plain. Property is a kind of good which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute subdivisions than fame. In the pursuit of wealth, men are led by an attention to their own interest to promote the welfare of each other; their advantages are reciprocal; the benefits which each is anxious to acquire for himself he reaps in the greatest abundance from the union and conjunction of society. The pursuits of vanity are quite contrary. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures to devote to the admiration of each other is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes. For though there be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men, fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man, every man in whom vanity is the ruling passion, regarding his rival as his enemy, is strongly tempted to rejoice in his miscarriage, and repine at his success.

Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple, unmixed state, so vanity, when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance; when it is disappointed, (and it is often disappointed,) it is exasperated into malignity, and cor-

rupted into envy. In this stage the vain man commences a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellence which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their insensibility to his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world; the vices and miseries of men are his element and his food. Virtues, talents, and genius, are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness and unrelenting hostility. There are who doubt the existence of such a disposition; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity: a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such a profound indifference to the welfare of others, that, whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man is his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize; he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence, or his steps are dyed in blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred.

His apparent good qualities lose all their worth, by losing all that is simple, genuine, and natural; they are even pressed into the service of vanity, and become the means of enlarging its power. The truly good man is jealous over himself lest the notoriety of his best actions, by blending itself with their motive, should diminish their value; the vain man performs the same actions for the sake of that notoriety. The good man quietly discharges his duty, and shuns ostentation; the vain man considers every good deed lost that is not publicly displayed. The one is intent upon realities, the other upon semblances: the one aims to *be* virtuous, the other to *appear* so.

Nor is a mind inflated with vanity more disqualified for right action than just speculation, or better disposed to the pursuit of truth than the practice of virtue. To such a mind the simplicity of truth is disgusting. Careless of the improvement of mankind, and intent only upon astonishing with the appearance of novelty, the glare of paradox will be preferred to the light of truth; opinions will be embraced, not because they are just, but because they are new: the more flagitious, the more subversive of morals, the more alarming to the wise and good, the more welcome to men who estimate their literary powers by the mischief they produce, and who consider the anxiety and terror they impress as the measure of their renown. Truth is simple and uniform, while error may be infinitely varied: and as it is one thing to start paradoxes, and another to make discoveries, we need the less wonder at the prodigious increase of modern philosophers.

We have been so much accustomed to consider extravagant self-estimation merely as a *ridiculous* quality, that many will be surprised to find it treated as a vice pregnant with serious mischief to society. But to form a judgment of its influence on the manners and happiness of a nation, it is necessary only to look at its effects in a family; for bodies of men are only collections of individuals, and the greatest nation is nothing more than an aggregate of a number of families. Conceive of a domestic circle, in which each member is elated with a most extravagant opinion of himself, and a proportionable contempt of every other; is full of little contrivances to catch applause, and whenever he is not praised is sullen and disappointed. What a picture of disunion, disgust, and animosity would such a family present! How utterly would domestic affection be extinguished, and all the purposes of domestic society be defeated! The general prevalence of such dispositions must be accompanied by an equal proportion of general misery. The tendency of pride to produce strife and hatred, is sufficiently apparent from the pains men have been at to construct a system of politeness which is nothing more

than a sort of mimic humility, in which the sentiments of an offensive self-estimation are so far disguised and suppressed as to make them compatible with the spirit of society; such a mode of behaviour as would naturally result from an attention to the apostolic injunction: *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* But if the semblance be of such importance, how much more useful the reality! If the mere garb of humility be of such indispensable necessity that without it society could not subsist, how much better still would the harmony of the world be preserved, were the condescension, deference, and respect, so studiously displayed, a true picture of the heart!

The same restless and eager vanity which disturbs a family, when it is permitted in a great national crisis to mingle with political affairs, distracts a kingdom; infusing into those intrusted with the enaction of laws, a spirit of rash innovation and daring empiricism, a disdain of the established usages of mankind, a foolish desire to dazzle the world with new and untried systems of policy, in which the precedents of antiquity and the experience of ages are only consulted to be trodden under foot; and into the executive department of government, a fierce contention for pre-eminence, an incessant struggle to supplant and destroy, with a propensity to calumny and suspicion, proscription and massacre.

We shall suffer the most eventful season ever witnessed in the affairs of men to pass over our heads to very little purpose, if we fail to learn from it some useful lessons on the nature and progress of the passions. The true light in which the French revolution ought to be contemplated is that of a grand experiment on human nature. Among the various passions which that revolution has so strikingly displayed, none is more conspicuous than vanity; nor is it less difficult, without adverting to the national character of the people, to account for its extraordinary predominance. Political power, the most seducing object of ambition, never before circulated through so many hands; the prospect of possessing it

was never before presented to many minds. Multitudes, who, by their birth and education, and not unfrequently by their talents, seemed destined to perpetual obscurity, were, by the alternate rise and fall of parties, elevated into distinction, and shared in the functions of government. The short-lived forms of power and office glided with such rapidity through successive ranks of degradation, from the court to the very dregs of the populace, that they seemed rather to solicit acceptance than to be a prize contended for.* Yet, as it was still impossible for all to possess authority, though none were willing to obey, a general impatience to break the ranks and rush into the foremost ground, maddened and infuriated the nation, and overwhelmed law, order, and civilization, with the violence of a torrent.

If such be the mischiefs both in public and private life resulting from an excessive self-estimation, it remains next to be considered whether Providence has supplied any medicine to correct it; for as the reflection on excellencies, whether real or imaginary, is always attended with pleasure to the possessor, it is a disease deeply seated in our nature.

Suppose there were a great and glorious Being always present with us, who had given us existence, with numberless other blessings, and on whom we depended each instant, as well for every present enjoyment as for every future good: suppose, again, we had incurred the just displeasure of such a Being by ingratitude and disobedience, yet that in great mercy he had not cast us off, but had assured us he was willing to pardon and restore us on our humble entreaty and sincere repentance; say, would not an habitual sense of the presence of this Being, self-reproach for having displeased him, and an anxiety to recover his favour, be the most effectual antidote to pride? But such are the leading discoveries made by the christian revelation, and such the dispositions which a practical belief of it inspires.

Humility is the first fruit of religion. In the mouth

* ——— "Æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres." *Hor.*

of our Lord there is no maxim so frequent as the following: *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Religion, and that alone, teaches *absolute* humility; by which I mean a sense of our *absolute* nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other is often a disagreeable sentiment forced upon the mind, which may rather embitter the temper than soften it: that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful. The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favour. In so august a presence he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt: and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority, which must in many instances be felt, is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart.

The wicked (says the Psalmist) *through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all their thoughts.* When we consider the incredible vanity of the atheistical sect, together with the settled malignity and unrelenting rancour with which they pursue every vestige of religion, is it uncandid to suppose that its humbling tendency is one principal cause of their enmity; that they are eager to displace a Deity from the minds of men, that they may occupy the void; to crumble the throne of the Eternal into dust, that they may elevate themselves on its ruins; and that, as their licentiousness is impatient of restraint, so their pride disdains a superior?

We mentioned a ferocity of character as one effect of sceptical impiety. It is an inconvenience attending a controversy with those with whom we have few principles in common, that we are often in danger of reasoning inconclusively, for the want of its being clearly known and settled what our opponents admit, and what they deny.

The persons, for example, with whom we are at present engaged, have discarded humility and modesty from the catalogue of virtues; on which account we have employed the more time in evincing their importance: but whatever may be thought of humility as a *virtue*, it surely will not be denied that inhumanity is a most detestable *vice*; a vice, however, which scepticism has a most powerful tendency to inflame.

As we have already shown that pride hardens the heart, and that religion is the only effectual antidote, the connexion between irreligion and inhumanity is in this view obvious. But there is another light in which this part of the subject may be viewed, in my humble opinion, much more important, though seldom adverted to. The supposition that man is a moral and accountable being, destined to survive the stroke of death, and to live in a future world in a never-ending state of happiness or misery, makes him a creature of incomparably more *consequence* than the opposite supposition. When we consider him as placed here by an Almighty Ruler in a state of probation, and that the present life is his period of trial, the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity, he assumes a dignified character in our eyes. Every thing which relates to him becomes interesting; and to trifle with his happiness is felt to be the most unpardonable levity. If such be the destination of man, it is evident that in the qualities which fit him for it, his principal dignity consists: his moral greatness is his true greatness. Let the sceptical principles be admitted, which represent him, on the contrary, as the offspring of chance, connected with no superior power, and sinking into annihilation at death, and he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. The characteristic difference is lost betwixt him and the brute creation, from which he is no longer distinguished, except by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions.

If we reflect on that part of our nature which disposes us to humanity, we shall find that, where we have no particular attachment, our sympathy with the sufferings

and concern for the destruction, of sensitive beings, are in proportion to their supposed importance in the general scale; or, in other words, to their supposed capacity of enjoyment. We feel, for example, much more at witnessing the destruction of a man than of an inferior animal, because we consider it as involving the extinction of a much greater sum of happiness. For the same reason, he who would shudder at the slaughter of a large animal, will see a thousand insects perish without a pang. Our sympathy with the calamities of our fellow-creatures is adjusted to the same proportions; for we feel more powerfully affected with the distress of fallen greatness than with equal or greater distresses sustained by persons of inferior rank; because, having been accustomed to associate with an elevated station, the idea of superior happiness, the loss appears the greater, and the wreck more extensive. But the disproportion in importance betwixt man and the meanest insect, is not so great as that which subsists betwixt man considered as *mortal* and as *immortal;* that is, betwixt man as he is represented by the system of scepticism, and that of divine revelation: for the enjoyment of the meanest insect bears some proportion, though a very small one, to the present happiness of man; but the happiness of time bears none at all to that of eternity. The sceptical system, therefore, sinks the importance of human existence to an inconceivable degree.

From these principles results the following important inference—that to extinguish human life by the hand of violence, must be quite a different thing in the eyes of a sceptic from what it is in those of a christian. With the sceptic it is nothing more than diverting the course of a little red fluid, called blood; it is merely lessening the number by one of many millions of fugitive contemptible creatures. The christian sees in the same event an accountable being cut off from a state of probation, and hurried, perhaps unprepared, into the presence of his Judge, to hear that final, that irrevocable sentence, which is to fix him for ever in an unalterable condition of felicity or woe. The former perceives in death nothing

but its physical circumstances; the latter is impressed with the magnitude of its moral consequences. It is the moral relation which man is supposed to bear to a superior power, the awful idea of accountability, the influence which his present dispositions and actions are conceived to have upon his eternal destiny, more than any superiority of intellectual powers abstracted from these considerations, which invest him with such mysterious grandeur, and constitute the firmest guard on the sanctuary of human life. This reasoning, it is true, serves more *immediately* to show how the disbelief of a future state endangers the security of life; but, though this be its *direct* consequence, it extends by analogy much further, since he who has learned to sport with the *lives* of his fellow-creatures will feel but little solicitude for their welfare in any other instance; but, as the greater includes the less, will easily pass from this to all the inferior gradations of barbarity.

As the advantage of the armed over the unarmed is not seen till the moment of attack, so in that tranquil state of society in which law and order maintain their ascendency, it is not perceived, perhaps not even suspected, to what an alarming degree the principles of modern infidelity leave us naked and defenceless. But let the state be convulsed, let the mounds of regular authority be once overflowed, and the still small voice of law drowned in the tempest of popular fury (events which recent experience shows to be possible), it will then be seen that atheism is a school of ferocity; and that, having taught its disciples to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, they will be prepared in the fierce conflicts of party to trample upon them without pity, and extinguish them without remorse.

It was late* before the atheism of Epicurus gained footing at Rome; but its prevalence was soon followed by such scenes of proscription, confiscation, and blood, as were *then* unparalleled in the history of the world; from

* "Neque enim assentior iis qui *hæc nuper* disserere cœperunt, cum corporibus simul animos interire atque omnia morte deleri." *Cicero de Amicitia.*

which the republic, being never able to recover itself, after many unsuccessful struggles, exchanged liberty for repose, by submission to absolute power. Such were the effects of atheism at Rome. An attempt has been recently made to establish a similar system in France, the consequences of which are too well known to render it requisite for me to shock your feelings by a recital. The only doubt that can arise is, whether the barbarities which have stained the revolution in that unhappy country are justly chargeable on the prevalence of atheism. Let those who doubt of this, recollect that the men who, by their activity and talents, prepared the minds of the people for that great change—*Voltaire*, *D'Alembert*, *Diderot*, *Rousseau*, and others, were avowed enemies of revelation; that in all their writings the diffusion of scepticism and revolutionary principles went hand in hand; that the fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the christian priesthood and religious institutions, without once pretending, like other persecutors, to execute the vengeance of God (whose name they never mentioned) upon his enemies; that their atrocities were committed with a wanton levity and brutal merriment; that the reign of atheism was avowedly and expressly the reign of terror; that in the full madness of their career, in the highest climax of their horrors, they shut up the temples of God, abolished his worship, and proclaimed death to be an eternal sleep; as if, by pointing to the silence of the sepulchre, and the sleep of the dead, these ferocious barbarians meant to apologize for leaving neither sleep, quiet, nor repose to the living.

As the infidels fabled that Minerva issued full armed from the head of Jupiter, no sooner were the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, than they gave birth to a ferocity which converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins; the seat of voluptuous refinement, of pleasure, and of arts, into a theatre of blood.

Having already shown that the principles of infidelity facilitate the commission of crimes, by removing the

restraints of fear; and that they foster the arrogance of the individual, while they inculcate the most despicable opinion of the species; the inevitable result is, that a haughty self-confidence, a contempt of mankind, together with a daring defiance of religious restraints, are the natural ingredients of the atheistical character; nor is it less evident that these are, of all others, the dispositions which most forcibly stimulate to violence and cruelty.

Settle it therefore in your minds, as a maxim never to be effaced or forgotten, that atheism is an inhuman, bloody, ferocious system, equally hostile to every useful restraint, and to every virtuous affection; that leaving nothing above us to excite awe, nor round us to awaken tenderness, it wages war with heaven and earth: its first object is to dethrone God, its next to destroy man.*

There is a third vice, not less destructive to society than either of those which have been already mentioned, to which the system of modern infidelity is favourable; that is, unbridled sensuality, the licentious and unrestrained indulgence of those passions which are essential to the continuation of the species. The magnitude of these passions, and their supreme importance to the existence as well as the peace and welfare of society, have rendered it one of the first objects of solicitude with every wise legislator, to restrain them by such laws, and to confine their indulgence within such limits, as shall best promote the great ends for which they were implanted.

The benevolence and wisdom of the Author of Christianity are eminently conspicuous in the laws he has enacted on this branch of morals; for, while he authorizes marriage, he restrains the vagrancy and caprice of the passions, by forbidding polygamy and divorce; and, well knowing that offences against the laws of chastity usually spring from an ill-regulated imagination, he in-

* As human nature is the same in all ages, it is not surprising to find the same moral systems, even in the most dissimilar circumstances produce corresponding effects. Josephus remarks that the Sadducees, a kind of Jewish infidels, whose tenets were the denial of a moral government and a future state, were distinguished from the other sects by their ferocity. *De Bell. Jud.* lib. ii. He elsewhere remarks, that they were eminent for their inhumanity in their judicial capacity.

culcates purity of heart. Among innumerable benefits which the world has derived from the christian religion, a superior refinement in the sexual sentiments, a more equal and respectful treatment of women, greater dignity and permanence conferred on the institution of marriage, are not the least considerable; in consequence of which the purest affections, and the most sacred duties, are grafted on the stock of the strongest instincts.

The aim of all the leading champions of infidelity is to rob mankind of these benefits, and throw them back into a state of gross and brutal sensuality. In this spirit, Mr. HUME represents the private conduct of the profligate CHARLES, whose debaucheries polluted the age, as a just subject of panegyric. A disciple in the same school has lately had the unblushing effrontery to stigmatize marriage as the worst of all monopolies; and, in a narrative of his licentious amours, to make a formal apology for departing from his principles, by submitting to its restraints. The popular productions on the continent, which issue from the atheistical school, are incessantly directed to the same purpose.

Under every possible aspect in which infidelity can be viewed, it extends the dominion of sensuality: it repeals and abrogates every law by which divine revelation has, under such awful sanctions, restrained the indulgence of the passions. The disbelief of a supreme, omniscient Being, which it inculcates, releases its disciples from an attention to the *heart*, from every care but the preservation of outward decorum: and the exclusion of the devout affections, and an unseen world, leaves the mind immersed in visible, sensible objects.

There are two sorts of pleasures, corporeal and mental. Though we are indebted to the senses for all our perceptions *originally*, yet those which are at the farthest remove from their *immediate impressions* confer the most elevation on the character; since, in proportion as they are multiplied and augmented, the slavish subjection to the senses is subdued. Hence the true and only antidote to debasing sensuality is the possession of a fund of that *kind of enjoyment* which is independent of

the corporeal appetites. Inferior in the perfection of several of his senses to different parts of the brute creation, the superiority of man over them all consists in his superior power of multiplying by new combinations his mental perceptions, and thereby of creating to himself resources of happiness separate from external sensation. In the scale of enjoyment, at the first remove from sense are the pleasures of reason and society; at the next are the pleasures of devotion and religion. The former, though totally distinct from those of sense, are yet less perfectly adapted to moderate their excesses than the last, as they are in a great measure conversant with visible and sensible objects.—The religious affections and sentiments are, in fact, and were intended to be, the *proper antagonist* of sensuality: the great deliverer from the thraldom of the appetites, by opening a spiritual world, and inspiring hopes and fears, and consolations and joys, which bear no relation to the material and sensible universe. The criminal indulgence of sensual passions admits but of two modes of prevention; the establishment of such laws and maxims in society as shall render lewd profligacy impracticable or infamous, or the infusion of such principles and habits as shall render it distasteful. Human legislatures have encountered the disease in the first, the truths and sanctions of revealed religion in the last, of these methods: to both of which the advocates of modern infidelity are equally hostile.

So much has been said by many able writers to evince the inconceivable benefit of the marriage institution, that to hear it seriously attacked by men who style themselves philosophers, at the close of the eighteenth century, must awaken indignation and surprise. The object of this discourse leads us to direct our attention particularly to the influence of this institution on the *civilization* of the world.

From the records of revelation we learn that marriage, or the *permanent union* of the sexes, was ordained by God, and existed, under different modifications, in the early infancy of mankind, without which they could

never have emerged from barbarism. For, conceive only what eternal discord, jealousy, and violence would ensue, were the objects of the tenderest affections secured to their possessor by no law or tie of moral obligation: were domestic enjoyments disturbed by incessant fear, and licentiousness inflamed by hope. Who could find sufficient tranquillity of mind to enable him to plan or execute any continued scheme of action, or what room for arts, or sciences, or religion, or virtue, in that state in which the chief earthly happiness was exposed to every lawless invader; where one was racked with an incessant anxiety to keep what the other was equally eager to acquire? It is not probable in itself, independent of the light of Scripture, that the benevolent Author of the human race ever placed them in so wretched a condition at first: it is certain they could not remain in it long, without being exterminated. Marriage, by shutting out these evils, and enabling every man to rest secure in his enjoyments, is the great civilizer of the world: with this security the mind is at liberty to expand in generous affections, and has leisure to look abroad, and engage in the pursuits of knowledge, science, and virtue.

Nor is it in this way only that marriage institutions are essential to the welfare of mankind. They are sources of tenderness, as well as the guardians of peace. Without the permanent union of the sexes, there can be no permanent families: the dissolution of nuptial ties involves the dissolution of domestic society. But domestic society is the seminary of social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity which cement mankind together; and, were they entirely extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved.

Families are so many centres of attraction, which preserve mankind from being scattered and dissipated by the repulsive powers of selfishness. The order of nature is evermore from particulars to generals. As in the operations of intellect we proceed from the contemplation of individuals to the formation of general abstractions, so in the development of the passions in like manner, we advance from private to public affections; from the love of parents, brothers, and sisters, to those more expanded regards which embrace the immense society of human kind.*

In order to render men benevolent, they must first be made tender: for benevolent affections are not the offspring of reasoning; they result from that culture of the heart, from those early impressions of tenderness, gratitude, and sympathy, which the endearments of domestic life are sure to supply, and for the formation of which it is the best possible school.

The advocates of infidelity invert this eternal order of nature. Instead of inculcating the private affections, as a discipline by which the mind is prepared for those of a more public nature, they set them in direct opposition to each other, they propose to build general benevolence on the destruction of individual tenderness, and to make us love the whole species more by loving every particular part of it less. In pursuit of this chimerical project, gratitude, humility, conjugal, parental, and filial affection, together with every other social disposition, are reprobated—virtue is limited to a passionate attachment to the general good. Is it not natural to ask, when all the tenderness of life is extinguished, and all the bands of society are untwisted, from whence this ardent affection for the general good is to spring?

When this savage philosophy has completed its work, when it has taught its disciple to look with perfect indifference on the offspring of his body, and the wife of his bosom, to estrange himself from his friends, insult his benefactors, and silence the pleadings of gratitude and pity; will he, by thus divesting himself of all that is human, be better prepared for the disinterested

* "Arctior vero colligatio est societatis propinquorum: ab illa enim immensa societate humani generis, in exiguum angustumque concluditur. Nam cum sit hoc natura commune animantium, ut habeant lubidinem procreandi, prima societas in ipso conjugio est; proxima in liberis; deinde una domus, communia omnia. Id autem est principium urbis, et quasi seminarium reipublicæ."—*Cic. de Off.* lib. i. cap. 17

love of his species? Will he become a philanthropist only because he has ceased to be a man? Rather, in this total exemption from all the feelings which humanize and soften, in this chilling frost of universal indifference, may we not be certain that selfishness, unmingled and uncontrolled, will assume the empire of his heart; and that, under pretence of advancing the general good, an object to which the fancy may give innumerable shapes, he will be prepared for the violation of every duty, and the perpetration of every crime? Extended benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of the private affections; so that to expect to reap the former from the extinction of the latter, is to oppose the means to the end; is as absurd as to attempt to reach the summit of the highest mountain without passing through the intermediate spaces, or to hope to attain the heights of science by forgetting the first elements of knowledge. These absurdities have sprung, however, in the advocates of infidelity, from an ignorance of human nature, sufficient to disgrace even those who did not style themselves philosophers. Presuming, contrary to the experience of every moment, that the affections are awakened by *reasoning*, and perceiving that the general good is an incomparably greater object *in itself* than the happiness of any limited number of individuals, they inferred nothing more was necessary than to exhibit it in its just dimensions, to draw the *affections* towards it; as though the fact of the superior populousness of China to Great Britain needed but to be known, to render us indifferent to our domestic concerns, and lead us to direct all our anxiety to the prosperity of that vast but remote empire.

It is not the province of reason to awaken new passions, or open new sources of sensibility; but to direct us in the attainment of those objects which nature has already rendered pleasing, or to determine, among the interfering inclinations and passions which sway the mind, which are the fittest to be preferred

Is a regard to the general good, then, you will reply, to be excluded from the motives of action? Nothing

is more remote from my intention: but as the nature of this motive has, in my opinion, been much misunderstood by some good men, and abused by others, of a different description, to the worst of purposes, permit me to declare, in a few words, what appears to me to be the truth on this subject.

The welfare of the whole system of being, must be allowed to be, in itself, the object of all others the most worthy of being pursued; so that, could the mind distinctly embrace it, and discern at every step *what action* would infallibly promote it, we should be furnished with a sure criterion of right and wrong, an unerring guide, which would supersede the use and necessity of all inferior rules, laws, and principles.

But this being impossible, since the good of the *whole* is a motive so loose and indeterminate, and embraces such an infinity of relations, that before we could be certain what action it prescribed, the season of action would be past; to weak, short-sighted mortals, Providence has assigned a sphere of agency, less grand and extensive indeed, but better suited to their limited powers, by implanting certain *affections* which it is their duty to cultivate, and suggesting particular rules to which they are bound to conform. By these provisions the boundaries of virtue are easily ascertained, at the same time that its ultimate object, the good of the whole, is secured; for, since the happiness of the entire system results from the happiness of the several parts, the affections, which confine the attention *immediately* to the latter, conspire in the end to the promotion of the former; as the labourer, whose industry is limited to a corner of a large building, performs his part towards rearing the structure much more effectually than if he extended his care to the whole.

As the interest, however, of any limited number of persons may not only not contribute, but may possibly be directly opposed to the general good (the interest of a family, for example, to that of a province, or of a nation to that of the world), Providence has so ordered it, that in a well-regulated mind, there springs up, as we have

already seen, besides particular attachments, *an extended regard to the species*, whose office is two-fold: not to *destroy* and *extinguish* the more private affections, which is mental parricide; but first, as far as is consistent with the claims of those who are immediately committed to our care, *to do good to all men;* secondly, to exercise a jurisdiction and control over the private affections, so as to prohibit their indulgence, whenever it would be attended with *manifest detriment* to the whole. Thus every part of our nature is brought into action; all the practical principles of the human heart find an element to move in, each in its different sort and manner conspiring, without mutual collisions, to maintain the harmony of the world and the happiness of the universe.*

* It is somewhat singular, that many of the fashionable infidels have hit upon a definition of virtue which perfectly coincides with that of certain metaphysical divines in America, first invented and defended by that most acute reasoner, JONATHAN EDWARDS. They both place virtue exclusively in a passion for the general good; or, as Mr. Edwards expresses it, *love to being in general;* so that our love is always to be proportioned to the magnitude of its object in the scale of being: which is liable to the objections I have already stated, as well as to many others which the limits of this note will not permit me to enumerate. Let it suffice to remark, (1.) That virtue, on these principles, is an utter impossibility: for the system of being, comprehending the great Supreme, is *infinite*,—and therefore, to maintain the proper proportion, the force of particular attachment must be infinitely less than the passion for the general good; but the limits of the human mind are not capable of any emotion so infinitely different *in degree*. (2.) Since *our views* of the extent of the universe are capable of perpetual enlargement, admitting the sum of existence is ever the same, we must return back at each step to diminish the strength of particular affections, or they will become disproportionate: and consequently, on these principles, vicious; so that the balance must be continually fluctuating, by the weights being taken out of one scale and put into the other. (3.) If virtue consist *exclusively* in love to being in general, or attachment to the general good, the particular affections are, to every purpose of virtue, useless, and even pernicious; for their immediate, nay, their necessary tendency is to attract to their objects a proportion of attention which far exceeds their comparative value in the general scale. To allege that the *general good* is promoted by them, will be of no advantage to the defence of this system, but the contrary, by confessing that a greater sum of happiness is attained by a deviation from, than an adherence to, its principles; unless its advocates mean by the love of being in general the same thing as the private affections, which is to confound all the distinctions of language, as well as all the operations of mind. Let it be remembered, we have no dispute respecting what is the ultimate end of virtue, which is allowed on both sides to be the greatest sum of happiness in the universe. The question is merely what is *virtue itself*: or, in other words, what are the means appointed for the attainment of that end?

There is little doubt, from some parts of Mr. Godwin's work, entitled, "Political Justice," as well as from his early habits of reading, that he was indebted to Mr. Edwards for his principal arguments against the private affections; though, with a daring consistency, he has pursued his principles to an extreme from which that most excellent man would have revolted with horror. The fundamental error of the whole system arose, as I conceive, from a mistaken pursuit of simplicity: from a wish to construct a moral system, without leaving sufficient scope for the infinite variety of moral phenomena and mental combination; in consequence of which its advocates were induced to place virtue *exclusively* in some *one disposition* of mind: and since the passion for the general good is undeniably the *noblest* and most extensive of all others, when it was once resolved to place virtue in any *one thing*, there remained little room to hesitate which should be preferred. It might have been worth while to reflect, that in the natural world there are two kinds of attraction; one, which holds the several *parts* of individual bodies in contact; another, which maintains the union of bodies themselves with the general system: and that, though the union in the former case is more *intimate* than in the latter, each is equally essential to the order of the world. Similar to this is the relation which the public and private affections bear to each other, and their use in the moral system.

Before I close this discourse, I cannot omit to mention three circumstances attending the propagation of infidelity by its present abettors, equally new and alarming.

1. It is the first attempt which has been ever witnessed, on an extensive scale, to establish *the principles of atheism;* the first effort which history has recorded to disannul and extinguish the belief of all superior powers; the consequence of which, should it succeed, would be to place mankind in a situation never before experienced, not even during the ages of pagan darkness. The system of polytheism was as remote from modern infidelity as from true religion. Amidst that rubbish of superstition, the product of fear, ignorance, and vice, which had been accumulating for ages, some faint embers of sacred truth remained unextinguished; the interposition of unseen powers in the affairs of men was believed and revered, the sanctity of oaths was maintained, the idea of *revelation* and of *tradition*, as a source of religious knowledge, was familiar; a useful persuasion of the existence

of a future world was kept alive, and the greater gods were looked up to as the guardians of the public welfare, the patrons of those virtues which promote the prosperity of states, and the avengers of injustice, perfidy, and fraud.*

* The testimony of Polybius to the beneficial effects which resulted from the system of pagan superstition, in fortifying the sentiments of moral obligation, and supporting the sanctity of oaths, is so weighty and decisive, that it would be an injustice to the subject not to insert it; more especially as it is impossible to attribute it to the influence of credulity on the author himself, who was evidently a sceptic. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that all the benefits which might in any way flow from superstition, are secured to an incomparably greater degree by the belief of true religion.

"But among all the useful institutions (says Polybius) that demonstrate the superior excellence of the Roman government, the most considerable, perhaps is the opinion which people are taught to hold concerning the gods: and that which other men regard as an object of disgrace, appears, in my judgment, to be the very thing by which this republic is chiefly sustained. I mean superstition, which is impressed with all its terrors, and influences the private actions of the citizens and the public administration of the state, to a degree that can scarcely be exceeded.

"The ancients, therefore, acted not absurdly, nor without good reason, when they inculcated the notions concerning the gods, and the belief of infernal punishments; but much rather *are those of the present age to be charged with rashness and absurdity*, in endeavouring to extirpate these opinions; for, not to mention other effects that flow from such an institution, if among the Greeks, for example, a single talent only be entrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money, though they give ten written sureties, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are unable to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity. But the Romans, on the other hand, who in the course of their magistracies and in embassies disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed on, by the single obligation of an oath, to perform their duty with inviolable honesty And, as in other states, a man is rarely to be found whose hands are pure from public robbery, so among the Romans it is no less rare to discover one that is tainted with this crime."—*Hampton's Polybius*, Vol. III. book vi.

Though the system of paganism is justly condemned by reason and scripture, yet it assumed as true several principles of the first importance to the preservation of public manners; such as a persuasion of invisible power, of the folly of incurring the divine vengeance for the attainment of any present advantage, and the divine approbation of virtue: so that, strictly speaking, it was the mixture of truth in it which gave it all its utility, which is well stated by the *great and judicious* Hooker in treating on this subject. "Seeing, therefore, it doth thus appear, (says that venerable author,) that the safety of all states dependeth upon religion: that religion, unfeignedly loved, perfecteth men's abilities unto all kinds of virtuous services in the commonwealth; that

Of whatever benefit superstition might formerly be productive, by the scattered particles of truth which it contained, these advantages can now only be reaped from the soil of true religion; nor is there any other alternative left than the belief of Christianity, or absolute atheism. In the revolutions of the human mind, exploded *opinions* are often revived; but an exploded superstition never recovers its credit. The pretension to divine revelation is so august and commanding, that when its falsehood is once discerned, it is covered with all the ignominy of detected imposture; it falls from such a height (to change the figure), that it is inevitably crumbled into atoms. Religions, whether false or true, are not creatures of arbitrary institution. After discrediting the principles of piety, should our modern free-thinkers find it necessary, in order to restrain the excesses of ferocity, to seek for a substitute in some popular superstition, it will prove a vain and impracticable attempt: they may recall the names, restore the altars, and revive the ceremonies; but to rekindle the spirit of heathenism will exceed their power; because it is impossible to enact ignorance by law, or to repeal by legislative authority the dictates of reason and the light of science.

2. The efforts of infidels to diffuse the principles of infidelity among the common people, is another alarming symptom peculiar to the present time. HUME, BOLINGBROKE, and GIBBON, addressed themselves solely to the more polished classes of the community, and would have thought their refined speculations debased by an attempt to enlist disciples from among the populace. Infidelity has lately grown condescending; bred in the speculations of a daring philosophy, immured at first in the cloisters

men's desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and that whatever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain sparks of the light of truth intermingled with the darkness of error; because no religion can wholly and only consist of untruths, we have reason to think that all true virtues are to honour *true religion* as their parent, and all well ordered commonweals to love her as their chiefest stay."—*Eccles. Pol.* book v.

of the learned, and afterwards nursed in the lap of voluptuousness and of courts; having at length reached its full maturity, it boldly ventures to challenge the suffrages of the people, solicits the acquaintance of peasants and mechanics, and seeks to draw whole nations to its standard.

It is not difficult to account for this new state of things. While infidelity was rare, it was employed as the instrument of literary vanity; its wide diffusion having disqualified it for answering that purpose, it is now adopted as the organ of political convulsion. Literary distinction is conferred by the approbation of a few; but the total subversion and overthrow of society demand the concurrence of millions.

3. The infidels of the present day are the first sophists who have presumed to innovate in the very *substance* of morals. The disputes on moral questions, hitherto agitated amongst philosophers, have respected the *grounds* of duty, not the *nature of duty itself;* or they have been merely metaphysical, and related to the *history* of moral sentiments in the mind, the sources and principles from which they were most easily deduced; they never turned on the quality of those dispositions and actions which were to be denominated virtuous. In the firm persuasion that the love and fear of the Supreme Being, the sacred observation of promises and oaths, reverence to magistrates, obedience to parents, gratitude to benefactors, conjugal fidelity, and parental tenderness, were primary virtues, and the chief support of every commonwealth, they were unanimous. The curse denounced upon such as remove ancient land-marks, upon those who call good evil, and evil good, put light for darkness, and darkness for light, who employ their faculties to subvert the eternal distinctions of right and wrong, and thus to poison the streams of virtue at their source, falls with accumulated weight on the advocates of modern infidelity, and on them alone.

Permit me to close this discourse with a few serious reflections.—There is much, it must be confessed, in the

apostacy of multitudes, and the rapid progress of infidelity, to awaken our fears for the virtue of the rising generation; but nothing to shake our faith; nothing which scripture itself does not give us room to expect. The features which compose the character of apostates, their profaneness, presumption, lewdness, impatience of subordination, restless appetite for change, vain pretensions to freedom and to emancipate the world, while themselves are the slaves of lust, the weapons with which they attack Christianity, and the snares they spread for the unwary, are depicted in the clearest colours by the pencil of prophecy: *Knowing this first* (says Peter), *that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.** In the same epistle he more fully describes the persons he alludes to; *as chiefly them which walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; sporting themselves in their own deceivings, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: for when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error; while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.*† Of the same characters Jude admonishes us *to remember that they were foretold as mockers, who should be in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they* (he adds) *who separate themselves* (by apostasy), *sensual, not having the Spirit.* Infidelity is an evil of short duration. "*It has* (as a judicious writer observes) *no individual subsistence given it in the system of prophecy. It is not a* BEAST; *but a mere putrid excrescence of the papal beast: an excrescence which though it may diffuse death through every vein of the body on which it grew, yet shall die along with it.*"‡ Its enormities will hasten its overthrow. It is impossible that a

* 2 Pet. iii. 3. † 2 Pet. ii. 10, &c.

‡ See an excellent work, by the Rev. Andrew Fuller, entitled, "The Gospel its own Witness." This valuable piece is reprinted in

system which, by vilifying every virtue, and embracing the patronage of almost every vice and crime, wages war with all the order and civilization of the world; which, equal to the establishment of nothing, is armed only with the energies of destruction, can long retain an ascendency. It is in no shape formed for perpetuity. Sudden in its rise, and impetuous in its progress, it resembles a mountain torrent, which is loud, filthy, and desolating: but, being fed by no perennial spring, is soon drained off, and disappears. By permitting to a certain extent the prevalence of infidelity, Providence is preparing new triumphs for religion. In asserting its authority, the preachers of the gospel have hitherto found it necessary to weigh the prospects of immortality against the interests of time; to strip the world of its charms, to insist on the deceitfulness of pleasure, the unsatisfying nature of riches, the emptiness of grandeur, and the nothingness of a mere worldly life. Topics of this nature will always have their use; but it is not by such representations alone that the importance of religion is evinced. The prevalence of impiety has armed us with new weapons in its defence.

Religion being primarily intended to make men *wise unto salvation*, the support it ministers to social order, the stability it confers on government and laws, is a *subordinate species* of advantage which we should have continued to enjoy, without reflecting on its cause, but for the development of deistical principles, and the experiment which has been made of their effects in a neighbouring country. It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than Christianity, needed but to be tried to produce an immense accession of human happiness; and christian nations, careless and supine, retaining little of religion but the profession, and disgusted with its restraints, lent a favourable ear to these pretensions. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of christendom, revelation under-

vol. i. of the uniform edition of Mr. Fuller's Works, now publishing by his son, Mr. A. G. Fuller.—Ed.

went a total eclipse,* while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sex, in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre; that the imperishable memorial of these events might teach the last generations of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyment of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honours, and to princes the stability of their thrones.

We might ask the patrons of infidelity what fury impels them to attempt the subversion of Christianity? Is it that they have discovered a better system? To what virtues are their principles favourable? Or is there one which Christians have not carried to a higher perfection than any of which their party can boast? Have they discovered a more excellent rule of life, or a better hope in death, than that which the Scriptures suggest? Above all, what are the pretensions on which they rest their claims to be the guides of mankind; or which embolden them to expect we should trample upon the experience of ages, and abandon a religion which has been attested by a train of miracles and prophecies, in which millions of our forefathers have found a refuge in every trouble, and consolation in the hour of death: a religion which has been adorned with the highest sanctity of character and splendor of talents, which enrols amongst its disciples the names of Bacon, Newton, and Locke, the glory of their species, and to which these illus-

* It is worthy of attention that Mercier, a warm advocate of the French Revolution, and a professed deist, in his recent work, entitled, "New Paris," acknowledges and laments the extinction of religion in France. "*We have,*" says he, "*in proscribing superstition, destroyed all religious sentiment; but this is not the way to regenerate the world*" See Appendix to the 30th vol. of the Monthly Review.

trious men were proud to dedicate the last and best fruits of their immortal genius?

If the question at issue is to be decided by argument, nothing can be added to the triumph of Christianity; if by an appeal to authority, what have our adversaries to oppose to these great names? Where are the infidels of such pure, uncontaminated morals, unshaken probity, and extended benevolence, that we should be in danger of being seduced into impiety by their example? Into what obscure recesses of misery, into what dungeons, have their philanthropists penetrated, to lighten the fetters and relieve the sorrows of the helpless captive? What barbarous tribes have their apostles visited: what distant climes have *they* explored, encompassed with cold, nakedness, and want, to diffuse principles of virtue, and the blessings of civilization? Or will they rather choose to waive their pretensions to this extraordinary, and in their eyes, eccentric species of benevolence, (for infidels, we know, are sworn enemies to enthusiasm of every sort,) and rest their character on their political exploits; on their efforts to reanimate the virtue of a sinking state, to restrain licentiousness, to calm the tumult of popular fury; and, by inculcating the spirit of justice, moderation, and pity for fallen greatness, to mitigate the inevitable horrors of revolution? our adversaries will at least have the discretion, if not the modesty, to recede from the test.

More than all, their infatuated eagerness, their parricidal zeal to extinguish a sense of Deity, must excite astonishment and horror. Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow? Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not pierce! Miserable men! Proud of being the offspring of chance; in love with universal disorder; whose happinon is

involved in the belief of there being no witness to their designs, and who are at ease only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world!

Having been led by the nature of the subject to consider chiefly the manner in which sceptical impiety affects the welfare of states, it is the more requisite to warn you against that most fatal mistake of regarding religion as an engine of policy; and to recall to your recollection that the concern we have in it is much more as *individuals* than as *collective bodies*, and far less temporal than eternal. The happiness which it confers in the present life comprehends the blessings which it scatters by the way in its march to immortality. That future condition of being which it ascertains, and for which its promises and truths are meant to prepare us, is the ultimate end of human societies, the final scope and object of present existence, in comparison of which all the revolutions of nations, and all the vicissitudes of time, are light and transitory. *Godliness has*, it is true, *the promise of the life that now is;* but chiefly *of that which is to come.* Other acquisitions may be requisite to make men great; but, be assured, the religion of Jesus is alone sufficient to make them good and happy. Powerful sources of consolation in sorrow, unshaken fortitude amidst the changes and perturbations of the world, humility remote from meanness, and dignity unstained by pride, contentment in every station, passions pure and calm, with habitual serenity, the full enjoyment of life, undisturbed by the dread of dissolution or the fear of an hereafter, are its invaluable gifts. To these enjoyments, however, you will necessarily continue strangers, unless you resign yourselves wholly to its power; for the consolations of religion are reserved to reward, to sweeten, and to stimulate obedience. Many, without renouncing the profession of Christianity, without formally rejecting its distinguishing doctrines, live in such an habitual violation of its laws, and contradiction to its spirit, that, conscious they have more to fear than to hope

from its truth, they are never able to contemplate it without terror. It haunts their imagination, instead of tranquillizing their hearts, and hangs with depressing weight on all their enjoyments and pursuits. Their religion, instead of comforting them under their troubles, is itself their greatest trouble, from which they seek refuge in the dissipation and vanity of the world, until the throbs and tumults of conscience force them back upon religion. Thus suspended betwixt opposite powers, the sport of contradictory influences, they are disqualified for the happiness of both worlds; and neither enjoy the pleasures of sin, nor the peace of piety. Is it surprising to find a mind thus bewildered in uncertainty, and dissatisfied with itself, courting deception, and embracing with eagerness every pretext to mutilate the claims and enervate the authority of Christianity: forgetting that it is of the very essence of the religious principle to preside and control, and that it is impossible to *serve God and mammon?* It is this class of professors who are chiefly in danger of being entangled in the snares of infidelity.

The champions of infidelity have much more reason to be ashamed than to boast of such converts. For what can be a stronger presumption of the falsehood of a system, than that it is the opiate of a restless conscience; that it prevails with minds of a certain description, not because they find it true, but because they feel it necessary; and that in adopting it they consult less with their reason than with their vices and their fears? It requires but little sagacity to foresee that speculations which originate in guilt must end in ruin. Infidels are not themselves satisfied with the truth of their system: for had they any settled assurance of its principles, in consequence of calm dispassionate investigation, they would never disturb the quiet of the world by their attempts to proselyte; but would lament their own infelicity, in not being able to perceive sufficient evidence for the truth of religion, which furnishes such incentives to virtue, and inspires such exalted hopes. Having nothing to substitute in the place of religion, it is absurd to suppose that, in

opposition to the collective voice of every country, age, and time, proclaiming its necessity, solicitude for the welfare of mankind impels them to destroy it.

To very different motives must their conduct be imputed. More like conspirators than philosophers, in spite of the darkness with which they endeavour to surround themselves, some rays of unwelcome conviction will penetrate, some secret apprehensions that all is not right will make themselves felt, which they find nothing so effectual to quell as an attempt to enlist fresh disciples, who, in exchange for new principles, impart confidence, and diminish fear. For the same reason it is seldom they attack Christianity by argument: their favourite weapons are ridicule, obscenity, and blasphemy; as the most miserable outcasts of society are, of all men, found most to delight in vulgar merriment and senseless riot.

Jesus Christ seems to have *his fan in his hand, to be thoroughly purging his floor;* and nominal christians will probably be scattered like chaff. But has *real* Christianity any thing to fear? Have not the degenerate manners and corrupt lives of multitudes in the visible church, been, on the contrary, the principal occasion of scandal and offence? Infidelity, without intending it, is gradually removing this reproach: possessing the property of attracting to itself the morbid humours which pervade the church, until the christian profession, on the one hand, is reduced to a sound and healthy state, and scepticism, on the other, exhibits nothing but a mass of putridity and disease.

In a view of the final issue of the contest, we should find little cause to lament the astonishing prevalence of infidelity, but for a solicitude for the rising generation, to whom its principles are recommended by two motives, with young minds the most persuasive; the love of independence, and the love of pleasure. With respect to the first, we would earnestly entreat the young to remember that, by the unanimous consent of all ages, modesty, docility, and reverence to superior years, and to parents above all, have been considered as their *appropriate virtues*, a guard assigned by the immutable laws of God and

nature on the inexperience of youth; and with respect to the second, that christianity prohibits no pleasures that are innocent, lays no restraints that are capricious; but that the sobriety and purity which it enjoins, by strengthening the intellectual powers, and preserving the faculties of mind and body in undiminished vigour, lay *the surest* foundation of present peace and future eminence. At such a season as this, it becomes an urgent duty on parents, guardians, and tutors, to watch, not only over the morals, but the principles of those committed to their care; to make it appear that a concern for their eternal welfare is their chief concern; and to imbue them early with that knowledge of the evidences of christianity, and that profound reverence for the Scriptures, that, with the blessing of God (which, with submission, they may then expect), *may keep them from this hour of temptation that has come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.*

To an attentive observer of the signs of the times, it will appear one of the most extraordinary phenomena of this eventful crisis, that, amidst the ravages of atheism and infidelity, real religion is evidently on the increase. *The kingdom of God*, we know, *cometh not with observation;* but still there are not wanting manifest tokens of its approach. The personal appearance of the Son of God was announced by the shaking of nations; his spiritual kingdom, in all probability, will be established in the midst of similar convulsions and disorders. The blasphemous impiety of the enemies of God, as well as the zealous efforts of his sincere worshippers, will doubtless be overruled to accomplish the purposes of his unerring providence: while, in inflicting the chastisements of offended Deity on corrupt communities and nations, infidelity marks its progress by devastation and ruin, by the prostration of thrones and concussion of kingdoms; thus appalling the inhabitants of the world, and compelling them to take refuge in the church of God, the true sanctuary; the stream of divine knowledge, unobserved, is flowing in new channels, winding its course among humble valleys, refreshing thirsty deserts, and

enriching with far other and higher blessings than those of commerce, the most distant climes and nations, until, agreeably to the prediction of prophecy, the *knowledge of the Lord shall fill and cover the whole earth.*

Within the limits of this discourse it would be impracticable to exhibit the evidences of christianity; nor is it my design; but there is one consideration, resulting immediately from my text, which is entitled to great weight with all who believe in the one living and true God as the sole object of worship. The Ephesians, in common with other Gentiles, are described in the text as being, previous to their conversion, *without God in the world;* that is, without any just and solid acquaintance with his character, destitute of the knowledge of his will, the institutes of his worship, and the hopes of his favour; to the truth of which representation whoever possesses the slightest acquaintance with pagan antiquity must assent. Nor is it a fact less incontestable, that, while human philosophy was never able to abolish idolatry in a single village, the promulgation of the gospel overthrew it in a great part (and that the most enlightened) of the world. If our belief in the unity and perfections of God, together with his moral government, and exclusive right to the worship of mankind, be founded in truth, they cannot reasonably be denied to be truths of the first importance, and infinitely to outweigh the greatest discoveries in science; because they turn the hopes, fears, and interests of man into a totally different channel from that in which they must otherwise flow. Wherever these principles are first admitted, there a new dominion is erected, and a new system of laws established.

But since all events are under divine direction, is it reasonable to suppose that the great Parent, after suffering his creatures to continue for ages ignorant of his true character, should at length in the course of his providence, fix upon falsehood, and that alone, as the effectual method of making himself known; and that what the virtuous exercise of reason in the best and wisest men was never permitted to accomplish, he should confer on fraud and delusion the honour of effecting? It ill

comports with the majesty of truth, or the character of God, to believe that he has built the noblest superstructure on the weakest foundation; or reduced mankind to the miserable alternative either of remaining destitute of the knowledge of himself, or of deriving it from the polluted source of impious imposture. We therefore feel ourselves justified on this occasion, in adopting the triumphant boast of the great apostle: *Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

NOTE TO PAGE 36.

The fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the christian priesthood, &c.—The author finds he has given great offence to some friends whom he highly esteems, by applying the term *christian priesthood* to the popish clergy. He begs leave to make a remark or two by way of apology.

1. It is admitted by all candid protestants that salvation is attainable in the Roman-catholic church; but he should be glad to be informed what part of the christian covenant entitles us to expect the salvation of those (where the gospel is promulgated) who are not even a branch of the visible church of Christ. The papistical tenets are either *fundamentally* erroneous, on which supposition it is certain no papist can be saved; or their errors must be consistent with christian faith, and consequently, cannot be a valid reason for excluding those who maintain them from being a part (a most corrupt part, if you please, but still a part) of the christian church.

2. The popish clergy were persecuted under the *character of christians*, not under the notion of heretics and schismatics. They who were the subjects of persecution were certainly the best judges of its aim and direction; and when the Archbishop of Paris and others endeavoured to screen themselves from its effects by a recantation, what did they recant? Was it popery? No; but the profession of christianity. These apostates, doubtless, meant to remove the ground of offence, which, in their opinion, was the christian profession. If the soundest ecclesiastical historians have

not refused the honours of martyrdom to such as suffered in the cause of truth amongst the Gnostics, it ill becomes the liberality of the present age to contemplate, with sullen indifference, or malicious joy, the sufferings of conscientious Catholics.

3. At the period to which the author refers, christian worship of *every kind* was prohibited; while in solemn mockery of religion, adoration was paid to a strumpet, under the title of the Goddess of Reason. Is it necessary to prove that men who were thus abandoned, must be hostile to true religion under every form? Or, if there be any gradations in their abhorrence, to that most which is the most pure and perfect? Are atheism and obscenity more congenial to the protestant than to the popish profession? To have incurred the hatred of the ruling party of France at the season alluded to, is an honour which the author would be sorry to resign, as the exclusive boast of the church of Rome. To have been the object of the partiality of such bloody and inhuman monsters, would have been a stain upon protestants which the virtue of ages could not obliterate.

REFLECTIONS ON WAR

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE,

ON TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 1802.

BEING THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING FOR A GENERAL PEACE.

PREFACE.

THE writer is not aware that the sentiments contained in this discourse require apology, though he is convinced he needs the candour of the public with respect to the imperfect manner in which they are exhibited. If it be deemed an impropriety to introduce political reflections in a discourse from the pulpit, he wishes it to be remembered that these are of a general nature, and such as, rising out of the subject and the occasion, he cannot suppose it improper for a christian minister to impress. With party politics he is determined to have as little to do as possible, and, in the exercise of his professional duties, nothing at all. Conscious that what is here advanced was meant neither to flatter nor offend any party, he is not very solicitous about those misconstructions or misrepresentations to which the purest intentions are exposed. It will probably be objected, that he has dwelt too much on the horrors of war for a Thanksgiving Sermon; in answer to which he begs it may be remembered, that, as the pleasure of rest is relative to fatigue, and that of ease to pain, so the blessing of peace, considered *merely as peace*, is exactly proportioned to the

calamity of war. As this, whenever it is justifiable, arises out of a *necessity*, not a desire of acquisition, its natural and proper effect is merely to replace a nation in the state it was in before that necessity was incurred, or, in other words, to recover what was lost, and secure what was endangered. The writer intended to add something more on the moral effects of war, (a subject which he should be glad to see undertaken by some superior hand,) but found it would not be compatible with the limits he determined to assign himself. The sermon having been preached for the benefit of a Benevolent Society, instituted at Cambridge, will sufficiently account for the observations on charity to the poor, introduced towards the close. The good which has already arisen from the exertions of that society is more than equal to its most sanguine expectations; and should this publication contribute in the smallest degree to the formation of similar ones in other parts, the author will think himself abundantly compensated for the little trouble it has cost him.

CAMBRIDGE,
June 19, 1802.

A SERMON.

PSALM xlvi. 8, 9.

Come, and behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

To the merciful interposition of Providence we owe it that our native land has been exempted for nearly sixty years from being the seat of war; our insular situation having preserved us, under God, from foreign invasion; the admirable balance of our constitution from internal discord. We have heard indeed of the ravages of armies, and the depopulation of countries, but they have merely supplied a topic of discourse, and have occasioned no serious alarm. The military system, as far as it has appeared in England, has been seen only on the side of its gaiety and pomp, a pleasing show, without imparting any idea of its horrors; and the rumours of battles and slaughter conveyed from afar have rather amused our leisure, than disturbed our repose. While we cannot be too thankful for our security, it has placed us under a disadvantage in one respect, which is, that we have learned to contemplate war with too much indifference, and to feel for the unhappy countries immediately involved in it too little compassion. Had we ever experienced its calamities, we should celebrate the restoration of peace on this occasion with warmer emotions than there is room to apprehend are at present felt. To awaken those sentiments of gratitude which we are this day assembled to express, it will be proper briefly to

recall to your attention some of the dreadful effects of hostility. Real war, my brethren, is a very different thing from that painted image of it, which you see on a parade, or at a review: it is the most awful scourge that Providence employs for the chastisement of man. It is the garment of vengeance with which the Deity arrays himself, when he comes forth to punish the inhabitants of the earth. It is *the day of the Lord, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger.* It is thus described by the sublimest of prophets: *Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty: therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt; pangs and sorrows shall take hold on them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flame. Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not give her light.*

War may be considered in two views, as it affects the happiness, and as it affects the virtue of mankind; as a source of misery, and as a source of crimes.

1. *Though we must all die,* as the woman of Tekoa said, *and are as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up;* yet it is impossible for a humane mind to contemplate the rapid extinction of innumerable lives without concern. To perish in a moment, to be hurried instantaneously, without preparation and without warning, into the presence of the Supreme Judge, has something in it inexpressibly awful and affecting. Since the commencement of these hostilities which are now so happily closed, it may be reasonably conjectured that not less than half a million of our fellow-creatures have fallen a sacrifice. Half a million of beings, sharers of the same nature, warmed with the same hopes, and as fondly attached to life as ourselves, have been prematurely swept into the grave; each of whose deaths has pierced the heart of a wife, a parent, a brother, or a sister. How

many of these scenes of complicated distress have occurred since the commencement of hostilities, is known only to Omniscience: that they are innumerable cannot admit of a doubt. In some parts of Europe, perhaps, there is scarcely a family exempt.

Though the whole race of man is doomed to dissolution, and we are all hastening to our long home; yet at each successive moment, life and death seem to divide betwixt them the dominion of mankind, and life to have the largest share. It is otherwise in war: death reigns there without a rival, and without control. War is the work, the element, or rather the sport and triumph, of death, who glories not only in the extent of his conquest, but in the richness of his spoil. In the other methods of attack, in the other forms which death assumes, the feeble and the aged, who at the best can live but a short time, are usually the victims; here it is the vigorous and the strong. It is remarked by an ancient historian, that in peace children bury their parents, in war parents bury their children:* nor is the difference small. Children lament their parents, sincerely indeed, but with that moderate and tranquil sorrow, which it is natural for those to feel who are conscious of retaining many tender ties, many animating prospects. Parents mourn for their children with the bitterness of despair; the aged parent, the widowed mother, loses, when she is deprived of her children, every thing but the capacity of suffering; her heart, withered and desolate, admits no other object, cherishes no other hope. *It is Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not.*

But, to confine our attention to the number of the slain, would give us a very inadequate idea of the ravages of the sword. The lot of those who perish instantaneously, may be considered, apart from religious prospects, as comparatively happy, since they are exempt

* In the former editions this sentiment was imputed to Homer: the truth, however, is, as Mr. Hall was afterwards aware, that it was due to his early favourite Herodotus, and occurs in the *Clio*. Ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῇ (εἰρήνῃ) οἱ παῖδες τοὺς πατέρας θάπτουσι· ἐν δὲ τῷ (πολέμῳ) οἱ πατέρες τοὺς παῖδας. Cap. 87. Ed.

from those lingering diseases and slow torments to which others are liable. We cannot see an individual expire, though a stranger or an enemy, without being sensibly moved, and prompted by compassion to lend him every assistance in our power. Every trace of resentment vanishes in a moment: every other emotion gives way to pity and terror. In these last extremities, we remember nothing but the respect and tenderness due to our common nature. What a scene, then, must a field of battle present, where thousands are left without assistance, and without pity, with their wounds exposed to the piercing air, while the blood, freezing as it flows, binds them to the earth, amidst the trampling of horses, and the insults of an enraged foe! If they are spared by the humanity of the enemy, and carried from the field, it is but a prolongation of torment. Conveyed in uneasy vehicles, often to a remote distance, through roads almost impassable, they are lodged in ill-prepared receptacles for the wounded and the sick, where the variety of distress baffles all the efforts of humanity and skill, and renders it impossible to give to each the attention he demands. Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, or mother, or sister, is near to soothe their sorrows, relieve their thirst, or close their eyes in death. Unhappy man! and must you be swept into the grave unnoticed and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your sufferings, or mingled with your dust?

We must remember, however, that as a very small proportion of a military life is spent in actual combat, so it is a very small part of its miseries which must be ascribed to this source. More are consumed by the rust of inactivity than by the edge of the sword; confined to a scanty or unwholesome diet, exposed in sickly climates, harassed with tiresome marches and perpetual alarms, their life is a continual scene of hardships and dangers. They grow familiar with hunger, cold, and watchfulness. Crowded into hospitals and prisons, contagion spreads among their ranks, till the ravages of disease exceed those of the enemy.

We have hitherto only adverted to the sufferings of those who are engaged in the profession of arms, without taking into our account the situation of the countries which are the scene of hostilities. How dreadful to hold every thing at the mercy of an enemy, and to receive life itself as a boon dependent on the sword. How boundless the fears which such a situation must inspire, where the issues of life and death are determined by no known laws, principles, or customs, and no conception can be formed of our destiny, except as far as it is dimly deciphered in characters of blood, in the dictates of revenge, and the caprices of power. Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villages in this neighbourhood. When you have placed yourselves for an instant in that situation, you will learn to sympathize with those unhappy countries which have sustained the ravages of arms. But how is it possible to give you an idea of these horrors? Here you behold rich harvests, the bounty of heaven and the reward of industry, consumed in a moment, or trampled under foot, while famine and pestilence follow the steps of desolation. There the cottages of peasants given up to the flames, mothers expiring through fear, not for themselves but their infants; the inhabitants flying with their helpless babes in all directions, miserable fugitives on their native soil! In another part you witness opulent cities taken by storm; the streets, where no sounds were heard but those of peaceful industry, filled on a sudden with slaughter and blood, resounding with the cries of the pursuing and the pursued; the palaces of nobles demolished, the houses of the rich pillaged, the chastity of virgins and of matrons violated, and every age, sex, and rank, mingled in promiscuous massacre and ruin.

If we consider the maxims of war which prevailed in the ancient world, and which still prevail in many barbarous nations, we perceive that those who survived the fury of battle and the insolence of victory, were only reserved for more durable calamities; swept into

hopeless captivity, exposed in markets, or plunged in mines, with the melancholy distinction bestowed on princes and warriors, after appearing in the triumphal procession of the conqueror, of being conducted to instant death. The contemplation of such scenes as these forces on us this awful reflection, that neither the fury of wild beasts, the concussions of the earth, nor the violence of tempests, are to be compared to the ravages of arms: and that nature in her utmost extent, or, more properly, divine justice in its utmost severity, has supplied no enemy to man so terrible as man.

Still, however, it would be happy for mankind if the effects of national hostility terminated here; but the fact is, that they who are farthest removed from its immediate desolations, share largely in the calamity. They are drained of the most precious part of their population, their youth, to repair the waste made by the sword. They are drained of their wealth, by the prodigious expense incurred in the equipment of fleets, and the subsistence of armies in remote parts. The accumulation of debt and taxes diminishes the public strength, and depresses private industry. An augmentation in the price of the necessaries of life, inconvenient to all classes, falls with peculiar weight on the labouring poor, who must carry their industry to market every day, and therefore cannot wait for that advance of price which gradually attaches to every other article. Of all people, the poor are, on this account, the greatest sufferers by war, and have the most reason to rejoice in the restoration of peace. As it is the farthest from my purpose to awaken unpleasing reflections, or to taint the pure satisfaction of this day, by the smallest infusion of political acrimony, it will not be expected I should apply these remarks to the peculiar circumstances of this country, though it would be unpardonable in us to forget (for to forget our dangers is to forget our mercies) how nearly we have been reduced to famine, principally, it is true, through a failure in the crops, but greatly aggravated, no doubt, in its pressure, by our being engaged in a war of unexampled expenditure and extent.

In commercial states, (of which Europe principally consists,) whatever interrupts their intercourse is a fatal blow to national prosperity. Such states, having a mutual dependence on each other, the effects of their hostility extend far beyond the parties engaged in the contest. If there be a country highly commercial, which has a decided superiority in wealth and industry, together with a fleet which enables it to protect its trade, the commerce of such a country may survive the shock, but it is at the expense of the commerce of all other nations; a painful reflection to a generous mind. Even there, the usual channels of trade being closed, it is some time before it can force a new passage for itself: previous to which, an almost total stagnation takes place, by which multitudes are impoverished, and thousands of the industrious poor, being thrown out of employment, are plunged into wretchedness and beggary. Who can calculate the number of industrious families in different parts of the world, to say nothing of our own country, who have been reduced to poverty, from this cause, since the peace of Europe was interrupted?

The plague of a widely extended war possesses, in fact, a sort of omnipresence, by which it makes itself every where felt; for while it gives up myriads to slaughter in one part of the globe, it is busily employed in scattering over countries, exempt from its immediate desolations, the seeds of famine, pestilence, and death.

If statesmen, if christian statesmen, at least, had a proper feeling on this subject, and would open their hearts to the reflections which such scenes must inspire, instead of rushing eagerly to arms from the thirst of conquest, or the thirst of gain, would they not hesitate long, would they not try every expedient, every lenient art consistent with national honour, before they ventured on this desperate remedy, or rather, before they plunged into this gulf of horror?

It is time to proceed to another view of the subject, which is, the influence of national warfare on the morals of mankind: a topic on which I must be very brief, but which it would be wrong to omit, as it supplies an

additional reason to every good man for the love of peace.

The contests of nations are both the offspring and the parent of injustice. The word of God ascribes the existence of war to the disorderly passions of men. *Whence come wars and fighting among you?* saith the apostle James; *come they not from your lusts, that war in your members?* It is certain two nations cannot engage in hostilities, but one party must be guilty of injustice; and if the magnitude of crimes is to be estimated by a regard to their consequences, it is difficult to conceive an action of equal guilt with the wanton violation of peace. Though something must generally be allowed for the complexness and intricacy of national claims, and the consequent liability to deception, yet where the guilt of an unjust war is clear and manifest, it sinks every other crime into insignificance. If the existence of war always *implies* injustice, in one at least of the parties concerned, it is also the fruitful parent of crimes. It reverses, with respect to its objects, all the rules of morality. It is nothing less than a temporary repeal of the principles of virtue. It is a system out of which almost all the virtues are excluded, and in which nearly all the vices are incorporated. Whatever renders human nature amiable or respectable, whatever engages love or confidence, is sacrificed at its shrine. In instructing us to consider a portion of our fellow-creatures as the proper objects of enmity, it removes, as far as they are concerned, the basis of all society, of all civilization and virtue; for the basis of these is the good-will due to every individual of the species, as being a part of ourselves. From this principle all the rules of social virtue emanate. Justice and humanity in their utmost extent are nothing more than the practical application of this great law. The sword, and that alone, cuts asunder the bond of consanguinity which unites man to man. As it immediately aims at the extinction of life, it is next to impossible, upon the principle that every thing may be lawfully done to him whom we have a right to kill, to set limits to military

license; for, when men pass from the dominion of reason to that of force, whatever restraints are attempted to be laid on the passions will be feeble and fluctuating. Though we must applaud, therefore, the attempts of the humane Grotius, to blend maxims of humanity with military operations, it is to be feared they will never coalesce, since the former imply the subsistence of those ties which the latter suppose to be dissolved. Hence the morality of peaceful times is directly opposite to the maxims of war. The fundamental rule of the first is to do good; of the latter, to inflict injuries. The former commands us to succour the oppressed; the latter to overwhelm the defenceless. The former teaches men to love their enemies; the latter to make themselves terrible even to strangers. The rules of morality will not suffer us to promote the dearest interest by falsehood; the maxims of war applaud it when employed in the destruction of others. That a familiarity with such maxims must tend to harden the heart, as well as to pervert the moral sentiments, is too obvious to need illustration. The natural consequence of their prevalence is an unfeeling and unprincipled ambition, with an idolatry of talents, and a contempt of virtue; whence the esteem of mankind is turned from the humble, the beneficent, and the good, to men who are qualified by a genius fertile in expedients, a courage that is never appalled, and a heart that never pities, to become the destroyers of the earth. While the philanthropist is devising means to mitigate the evils and augment the happiness of the world, a fellow worker together with God, in exploring and giving effect to the benevolent tendencies of nature, the warrior is revolving, in the gloomy recesses of his capacious mind, plans of future devastation and ruin. Prisons crowded with captives, cities emptied of their inhabitants, fields desolate and waste, are among his proudest trophies. The fabric of his fame is cemented with tears and blood; and if his name is wafted to the ends of the earth, it is in the shrill cry of suffering humanity; in the curses and imprecations of those whom his sword has reduced to despair.

Let me not be understood to involve in this guilt every man who engages in war, or to assert that war itself is in all cases unlawful. The injustice of mankind, hitherto incurable, renders it in some instances necessary, and therefore lawful; but unquestionably, these instances are much more rare than the practice of the world and its loose casuistry would lead us to suppose.

Detesting war, considered as a trade or profession, and conceiving conquerors to be the enemies of their species, it appears* to me that nothing is more suitable to the office of a christian minister, than an attempt, however feeble, to take off the colours from false greatness, and to show the deformity which its delusive splendour too often conceals. This is perhaps one of the best services religion can do to society. Nor is there any more necessary. For, dominion affording a plain and palpable distinction, and every man feeling the effects of power, however incompetent he may be to judge of wisdom and goodness, the character of a hero, there is reason to fear, will always be too dazzling. The sense of his injustice will be too often lost in the admiration of his success.

In contemplating the influence of war on public morals, it would be unpardonable not to remark the effects it never fails to produce in those parts of the world which are its immediate seat. The injury which the morals of a people sustain from an invading army is prodigious. The agitation and suspense universally prevalent are incompatible with every thing which requires calm thought or serious reflection. In such a situation is it any wonder the duties of piety fall into neglect, the sanctuary of God is forsaken, and the gates of Zion mourn and are desolate? Familiarized to the sight of rapine and slaughter, the people must acquire a hard and unfeeling character. The precarious tenure by which every thing is held during the absence of laws, must impair confidence; the sudden revolutions of fortune must be infinitely favourable to fraud and injustice. He who reflects

* "Non est inter artificia bellum, imo res est tam horrenda, ut eam nisi summa necessitas, aut vera caritas, honestam efficere queat. Augustino judice, militare non est delictum, sed propter prædam militare peccatum est." *Grot. de Jure Bell.* lib. ii. c. 25.

on these consequences, will not think it too much to affirm, that the injury the virtue of a people sustains from invasion is greater than that which affects their property or their lives. He will perceive, that by such a calamity the seeds of order, virtue, and piety, which it is the first care of education to implant and mature, are swept away as by a hurricane.

Though the sketch which I have attempted to give of the miseries which ensue, when nation lifts up arms against nation, is faint and imperfect, it is yet sufficient to imprint on our minds, a salutary horror of such scenes, and a gratitude, warm, I trust, and sincere, to that gracious Providence which has brought them to a close.

To acknowledge the hand of God is a duty indeed at all times; but there are seasons when it is made so bare, that it is next to impossible, and therefore signally criminal, to overlook it. It is almost unnecessary to add that the present is one of those seasons. If ever we are expected to *be still, and know that he is God*, it is on the present occasion, after a crisis so unexampled in the annals of the world; during which scenes have been disclosed, and events have arisen, so much more astonishing than any that history had recorded or romance had feigned, that we are compelled to lose sight of human agency, and to behold the Deity acting as it were apart and alone.

The contest in which we have been lately engaged is distinguished from all others in modern times by the number of nations it embraced, and the animosity with which it was conducted. Making its first appearance in the centre of the civilized world, like a fire kindled in the thickest part of a forest, it spread during ten years on every side; it burnt in all directions, gathering fresh fury in its progress, till it enwrapped the whole of Europe in its flames; an awful spectacle, not only to the inhabitants of the earth, but in the eyes of superior beings! What place can we point out to which its effects have not extended? Where is the nation, the family, the individual I might almost say, who has not felt its influence? It is not, my brethren, the termination of an

ordinary contest which we are assembled this day to commemorate; it is an event which includes for the present (may it long perpetuate) the tranquillity of Europe and the pacification of the world. We are met to express our devout gratitude to God for putting a period to a war, the most eventful perhaps that has been witnessed for a thousand years, a war which has transformed the face of Europe, removed the land-marks of nations and limits of empire.

The spirit of animosity with which it has been conducted is another circumstance which has eminently distinguished the recent contest. As it would be highly improper to enter, on this occasion, (were my abilities equal to the task,) into a discussion of those principles which have divided, and probably will long divide, the sentiments of men, it may be sufficient to observe, in general, that what principally contributed to make the contest so peculiarly violent, was a discordancy betwixt the opinions and the institutions of society. A daring spirit of speculation, untempered, alas! by humility and devotion, has been the distinguishing feature of the present times. While it confined itself to the exposure of the corruptions of religion and the abuses of power, it met with some degree of countenance from the wise and good in all countries, who were ready to hope it was the instrument destined by Providence to meliorate the condition of mankind. How great was their disappointment when they perceived that pretensions to philanthropy were, with many, only a mask assumed for the more successful propagation of impiety and anarchy!

From the prevalence of this spirit, however, a schism was gradually formed between the adherents of those, who, styling themselves philosophers, were intent on some great change, which they were little careful to explain, and the patrons of the ancient order of things. The pretensions of each were plausible. The accumulation of abuses and the corruptions of religion furnished weapons to the philosophers; the dangerous tendency of the speculations of these latter, together with their impiety, which became every day more manifest, gave an

advantage not less considerable to their opponents, which they did not fail to improve. In this situation the breach grew wider and wider; nothing temperate or conciliating was admitted. Every attempt at purifying religion without impairing its authority, and at improving the condition of society, without shaking its foundation, was crushed and annihilated in the encounter of two hostile forces. By this means the way was prepared, first for internal dissension, and then for wars the most bloody and extensive.

The war in which so great a part of the world was lately engaged has been frequently styled a war of principle. This was indeed its exact character; and it was this which rendered it so violent and obstinate. Disputes which are founded merely on passion or on interest, are comparatively of short duration. They are, at least, not calculated to spread. However they may inflame the principals, they are but little adapted to gain partizans.

To render them durable, there must be an infusion of speculative opinions. For, corrupt as men are, they are yet so much the creatures of reflection, and so strongly addicted to sentiments of right and wrong, that their attachment to a public cause can rarely be secured, or their animosity kept alive, unless their understandings are engaged by some appearances of truth and rectitude. Hence speculative differences in religion and politics become rallying points to the passions. Whoever reflects on the civil wars between the Guelphs and Ghibbelines, or the adherents of the pope and emperor, which distracted Italy and Germany in the middle ages; or those betwixt the houses of York and Lancaster, in the fifteenth century, will find abundant confirmation of this remark. This is well understood by the leaders of parties in all nations; who, though they frequently aim at nothing more than the attainment of power, yet always contrive to cement the attachment of their followers, by mixing some speculative opinion with their contests, well knowing that what depends for support merely on the irascible passions soon subsides. Then does party animosity reach its height, when, to n of in-

terests sufficient to kindle resentment, is superadded a persuasion of rectitude, a conviction of truth, an apprehension in each party that they are contending for principles of the last importance, on the success of which the happiness of millions depends. Under these impressions men are apt to indulge the most selfish and vindictive passions without suspicion or control. The understanding, indeed, in that state, instead of controlling the passions, often serves only to give steadiness to their impulse, to ratify and consecrate, so to speak, all their movements.

When we apply these remarks to the late contest, we can be at no loss to discover the source of the unparalleled animosity which inflamed it. Never before were so many opposing interests, passions, and principles committed to such a decision. On one side an attachment to the ancient order of things, on the other a passionate desire of change; a wish in some to perpetuate, in others to destroy every thing; every abuse sacred in the eyes of the former, every foundation attempted to be demolished by the latter; a jealousy of power shrinking from the slightest innovation, pretensions to freedom pushed to madness and anarchy; superstition in all its dotage, impiety in all its fury: whatever, in short, could be found most discordant in the principles, or violent in the passions of men, were the fearful ingredients which the hand of divine justice selected to mingle in this furnace of wrath. Can we any longer wonder at the desolations it made in the earth? Great as they are, they are no more than might be expected from the peculiar nature of the warfare. When we take this into our consideration, we are no longer surprised to find that the variety of its battles burdens the memory, that the imagination is perfectly fatigued in travelling over its scenes of slaughter, and that falling, like the mystic star in the Apocalypse, *upon the streams and the rivers, it turned the third part of their waters into blood.**

* The author has inserted some reflections here, which were not included in the discourse as delivered from the pulpit. He wished to explain himself somewhat more fully on certain points, on which his sentiments in a former publication have been much misunderstood or misrepresented. But this is a circumstance with which, as it has not troubled himself, he wishes not any farther to trouble the reader.

Whether the foundations of lasting tranquillity are laid, or a respite only afforded to the nations of the earth, in the present auspicious event, is a question, the discussion of which would only damp the satisfaction of this day. Whatever may be the future determinations of Providence, let no gloomy foreboding depress our gratitude for its gracious interposition in our favour. While we feel sentiments of respectful acknowledgment to the human instruments employed, let us remember they are but instruments, and that it is our duty to look through them to Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift.

Let us now turn to the pleasing part of our subject, which invites us to contemplate the reasons for gratitude and joy suggested by the restoration of peace.

Permit me to express my hope, that along with peace the spirit of peace will return. How can we better imitate our heavenly Father, than, when he is pleased to compose the animosities of nations, to open our hearts to every milder influence? Let us hope, more mutual forbearance, a more candid construction of each other's views and sentiments, will prevail. No end can now be answered by the revival of party disputes. The speculations which gave occasion to them have yielded to the arbitration of the sword, and neither the fortune of war, nor the present condition of Europe, is such as affords to any party room for high exultation. Our public and private affections are no longer at variance. That benevolence which embraces the world, is now in perfect harmony with the tenderness that endears our country. Burying in oblivion, therefore, all national antipathies, together with those cruel jealousies and suspicions which have too much marred the pleasures of mutual intercourse, let our hearts correspond to the blessing we celebrate, and keep pace, as far as possible, with the movements of divine beneficence.

A most important benefit has already followed the return of peace, a reduction of the price of bread; and though other necessaries of life have not fallen in proportion, this is a circumstance which can hardly fail to fol-

low. We trust the circumstances of the poor and the labouring classes will be much improved, and that there will shortly be no complaining in our streets. Every cottager, we hope, will feel that there is peace; commerce return to its ancient channels, the public burdens be lightened, the national debt diminished, and harmony and plenty again gladden the land.

In enumerating the motives to national gratitude, which the retrospect of the past supplies, it would be unpardonable not to reckon among the most cogent, the preservation of our excellent constitution; nor can I doubt of the concurrence of all who hear me when I add, it is a pleasing reflection, that at a period when the spirit of giddiness and revolt has been so prevalent, we have preferred the blessings of order to a phantom of liberty, and have not been so mad as to wade through the horrors of a revolution to make way for a military despot. If the constitution has sustained serious injury, either during the war, or at any preceding period, as there is great room to apprehend, we shall have leisure (may we but have virtue!) to apply temperate and effectual reforms. In the mean time, let us love it sincerely, cherish it tenderly, and secure it as far as possible, on all sides, watching with impartial solicitude against every thing that may impair its spirit, or endanger its form.

But above all, let us cherish the spirit of religion. When we wish to open our hearts on this subject, and to represent to you the vanity, the nothingness of every thing else in comparison, we feel ourselves checked by an apprehension you will consider it merely as professional language, and consequently entitled to little regard. If, however, you will only turn your eyes to the awful scenes before you, our voice may be spared. They will speak loud enough of themselves. On this subject they will furnish the most awful and momentous instruction. From them you will learn, that the safety of nations is not to be sought in arts or in arms; that science may flourish amidst the decay of humanity; that the utmost barbarity may be blended with the utmost refinement; that a passion for speculation, unrestrained by the fear of God

and a deep sense of human imperfection, merely hardens the heart; and that, as religion, in short, is the great tamer of the breast, the source of tranquillity and order, so the crimes of voluptuousness and impiety inevitably conduct a people, before they are aware, to the brink of desolation and anarchy.

If you had wished to figure to yourselves a country which had reached the utmost pinnacle of prosperity, you would undoubtedly have turned your eyes to France, as she appeared a few years before the revolution; illustrious in learning and genius; the favourite abode of the arts, and the mirror of fashion, whither the flower of the nobility from all countries resorted, to acquire the last polish of which the human character is susceptible. Lulled in voluptuous repose, and dreaming of a philosophical millennium, without dependence upon God, like the generation before the flood, *they ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage.* In that exuberant soil every thing seemed to flourish, but religion and virtue. The season however was at length arrived, when God was resolved to punish their impiety, as well as to avenge the blood of his servants, whose souls had for a century been incessantly crying to him from under the altar. And what method did he employ for this purpose? When He to whom vengeance belongs, when He whose ways are unsearchable, and whose wisdom is inexhaustible, proceeded to the execution of this strange work, he drew from his treasures a weapon he had never employed before. Resolving to make their punishment as signal as their crimes, he neither let loose an inundation of barbarous nations, nor the desolating powers of the universe: he neither overwhelmed them with earthquakes, nor visited them with pestilence. He summoned from among themselves a ferocity more terrible than either; a ferocity which, mingling in the struggle for liberty, and borrowing aid from that very refinement to which it seemed to be opposed, turned every man's hand against his neighbour, sparing no age, nor sex, nor rank, till, satiated with the ruin of greatness, the distresses of innocence, and the tears of beauty, it

terminated its career in the most unrelenting despotism. *Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and which wast, and which shalt be, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.*

If the weakness of humanity will not permit us to keep pace with the movements of divine justice; if, from the deep commiseration excited by the view of so much woe, our tongue falters in expressing those sublime sentiments of triumph which revelation suggests on this occasion, we shall be pardoned by the Being who knows our frame; while nothing can prevent us, at least, from adoring this illustrious vindication of his own religion, whose divinity we see is not less apparent in the blessings it bestows, than in the calamities which mark its departure.

Our only security against similar calamities is a steady adherence to this religion; not the religion of mere form and profession, but that which has a seat in the heart; not as it is mutilated and debased by the refinements of a false philosophy, but as it exists in all its simplicity and extent in the sacred Scriptures; consisting in sorrow for sin, in the love of God, and in faith in a crucified Redeemer. If this religion revives and flourishes amongst us, we may still surmount all our difficulties, and no weapon formed against us will prosper: if we despise or neglect it, no human power can afford us protection. Instead of showing our love to our country, therefore, by engaging eagerly in the strife of parties, let us choose to signalize it rather by beneficence, by piety, by an exemplary discharge of the duties of private life, under a persuasion that that man, in the final issue of things, will be seen to have been the best patriot, who is the best christian. He who diffuses the most happiness, and mitigates the most distress within his own circle, is undoubtedly the best friend to his country and the world, since nothing more is necessary than for all men to imitate his conduct, to make the greatest part of the misery of the world cease in a moment. While the passion, then, of some is to shine, of some to govern, and of others to accumulate,

let one great passion alone inflame our breasts, let the passion which reason ratifies, which conscience approves, which heaven inspires, that of being and of doing good.

There is no vanity, I trust, in supposing that the reflections which this Discourse has presented to your view, have awakened those sentiments of gratitude to the Father of mercies for his gracious interposition in the restoration of peace, which you are impatient to express by stronger evidence than words. Should this be the case, a plain path is before you. While the eminence of the divine perfections renders it impossible for us to contribute to the happiness, or augment the glory of the Creator, he has left amongst us, for the exercise of our virtue, the indigent and the afflicted, whom he has in an especial manner committed to our care, and appointed to represent himself. The objects of the institution, for which I have this day the honour to plead, are those of whom the very mention is sufficient to excite compassion in every feeling mind, *the sick and the aged poor.** To be scantily provided with the necessaries of life, to endure cold, hunger, and nakedness, is a great calamity at all seasons; it is almost unnecessary to observe how much these evils are aggravated by the pressure of disease, when exhausted nature demands whatever the most tender assiduity can supply to cheer its languor and support its sufferings. It is the peculiar misfortune of the afflicted poor, that the very circumstance which increases their wants, cuts off, by disqualifying them for labour, the means of their supply. Bodily affliction, therefore,

* It may be proper to remind the reader that this discourse was preached for the benefit of a Benevolent Society, recently instituted at Cambridge, for the relief of the sick and aged poor; and that one principal motive with the author for complying with the request of the Society in publishing it, was a desire to excite the attention of the benevolent to the formation of similar societies in other parts. For the local information of such as may be desirous of contributing to this Institution, the writer has the pleasure to add, that Mr. Alderman Ind, with that benignity which marks his character, has been so kind as to undertake the office of treasurer to the society, to whom the benevolent are requested to send their annual subscriptions or donations. A further account of the institution will be found at the end of the Sermon.

falls upon them with an accumulated weight. Poor, at best, when seized with sickness they become utterly destitute. Incapable even of presenting themselves to the eye of pity, nothing remains for them, but silently to yield themselves up to sorrow and despair. The second class of objects, which it is the design of this society to relieve, are *the aged poor*. Here it is quite unnecessary for me to attempt to paint to you the sorrows of old age; a period indeed which, by a strange inconsistency, we all wish to reach, while we shrink with a sort of horror from the infirmities and sufferings inseparable from that melancholy season. What can be a more pitiable object than decrepitude, sinking under the accumulated load of years and of penury? Arrived at that period when the most fortunate confess they have no pleasure, how forlorn is his situation, who, destitute of the means of subsistence, has survived his last child, or his last friend. Solitary and neglected, without comfort and without hope, depending for every thing on a kindness he has no means of conciliating, he finds himself left alone in a world to which he has ceased to belong, and is only felt in society as a burden it is impatient to shake off. Such are the objects to which this institution solicits your regard.

It is, in my humble opinion, a most excellent part of the plan of the Society, in whose behalf I address you, that no relief is administered without first personally visiting the objects in their own abode. By such means the precise circumstances of each case are clearly ascertained, and imposture is sure to be detected. Where charity is administered without this precaution, as it is impossible to discriminate real from pretended distress, the most disinterested benevolence often fails of its purpose; and that is yielded to clamorous importunity, which is withheld from lonely want. The mischief extends much farther. From the frequency of such imposition, the best minds are in danger of becoming disgusted with the exercise of pecuniary charity, till, from a mistaken persuasion that it is impossible to guard against deception, they treat the most abandoned and the most deserving with the same neglect. Thus the

heart contracts into selfishness, and those delicious emotions which the benevolent Author of Nature implanted to prompt us to relieve distress, become extinct; a loss greater to ourselves than to the objects to whom we deny our compassion. To prevent a degradation of character so fatal, allow me to urge on all whom Providence has blessed with the means of doing good, on those especially who are indulged with affluence and leisure, the importance of employing some portion of their time in *inspecting*, as well as of their property in *relieving*, the distresses of the time.

By this means an habitual tenderness will be cherished, which will heighten inexpressibly the happiness of life, at the same time that it will most effectually counteract that selfishness which a continual addictedness to the pursuits of avarice and ambition never fails to produce. As selfishness is a principle of continual operation, it needs to be opposed by some other principle, whose operation is equally uniform and steady; but the casual impulse of compassion, excited by occasional applications for relief, is by no means equal to this purpose. Then only will benevolence become a prevailing habit of mind, when its exertion enters into the *system* of life, and occupies some stated portion of the time and attention. In addition to this, it is worth while to reflect how much consolation the poor must derive from finding they are the objects of personal attention to their more opulent neighbours; that they are acknowledged as brethren of the same family; and that, should they be overtaken with affliction or calamity, they are in no danger of perishing unpitied and unnoticed. With all the pride that wealth is apt to inspire, how seldom are the opulent truly aware of their high destination. Placed by the Lord of all, on an eminence, and intrusted with a superior portion of his goods, to them it belongs to be the dispensers of his bounty, to succour distress, to draw merit from obscurity, to behold oppression and want vanish before them, and, accompanied wherever they move with perpetual benedictions, to present an image of Him, who, at the close of time, in the kingdom of the redeemed,

will *wipe away tears from all faces.* It is surely unnecessary to remark how insipid are the pleasures of voluptuousness and ambition, compared to what such a life must afford, whether we compare them with respect to the present, the review of the past, or the prospect of the future.

It is probable some may object that such exertions, however amiable in themselves, are rendered unnecessary by the system of parochial relief established in this country. To which it is obvious to reply, that however useful this institution may be, there must always be a great deal of distress, which it can never relieve. Like all national institutions, it is incapable of bending from the rigour of general rules, so as to adapt itself to the precise circumstance of each respective case. Besides that it would be vain to expect much tenderness in the execution of a legal office, the machine itself, though it may be well suited to the general purpose it is intended to answer, is too large and unwieldy to touch those minute points of difference, those distinct kinds and gradations of distress, to which the operation of personal benevolence will easily adapt itself. In addition to which it will occur to those who reflect, that on account of the increasing demands of the poor, the parochial system, which presses hard upon many ill able to bear it, is already strained to the utmost.

Although the Society in whose behalf I address you is but recently established, it has been enabled painfully to ascertain the vast proportion of its objects of the female sex,—a melancholy circumstance, deserving the serious attention of the public on more accounts than one. Of the cases which have occurred to their notice, since the commencement of their labours, more than three-fourths have been of that description. The situation of females without fortune in this country is indeed deeply affecting. Excluded from all the active employments in which they might engage with the utmost propriety, by men, who to the injury of one sex, add the disgrace of making the other effeminate and ridiculous, an indigent female, the object probably of love and tenderness in her youth,

at a more advanced age a withered flower! has nothing to do but to retire and die. Thus it comes to pass, that the most amiable part of our species, by a detestable combination in those who ought to be their protectors, are pushed off the stage, as though they were no longer worthy to live, when they ceased to be the objects of passion. How strongly on this account this society is entitled to your attention (as words would fail) I leave to the pensive reflection of your own bosoms.

To descant on the evils of poverty might seem entirely unnecessary, (for what with most is the great business of life, but to remove it to the greatest possible distance?) were it not, that besides its being the most common of all evils, there are circumstances peculiar to itself, which expose it to neglect. The seat of its sufferings are the appetites, not the passions; appetites which are common to all, and which, being capable of no peculiar combinations, confer no distinction. There are kinds of distress founded on the passions, which, if not applauded, are at least admired in their excess, as implying a peculiar refinement of sensibility in the mind of the sufferer. Embellished by taste, and wrought by the magic of genius into innumerable forms, they turn grief into a luxury, and draw from the eyes of millions delicious tears. But no muse ever ventured to adorn the distresses of poverty or the sorrows of hunger. Disgusting taste and delicacy, and presenting nothing pleasing to the imagination, they are mere misery in all its nakedness and deformity. Hence, shame in the sufferer, contempt in the beholder, and an obscurity of station, which frequently removes them from the view, are their inseparable portion. Nor can I reckon it on this account amongst the improvements of the present age, that, by the multiplication of works of fiction, the attention is diverted from scenes of real to those of imaginary distress; from the distress which demands relief, to that which admits of embellishment: in consequence of which the understanding is enervated, the heart is corrupted, and those feelings which were designed to stimulate to active benevolence are employed

in nourishing a sickly sensibility. To a most impure and whimsical writer,* whose very humanity is unnatural, we are considerably indebted for this innovation. Though it cannot be denied, that by diffusing a warmer colouring over the visions of fancy, sensibility is often a source of exquisite pleasures to others, if not to the possessor, yet it should never be confounded with benevolence; since it constitutes at best rather the ornament of a fine, than the virtue of a good, mind. A good man may have nothing of it, a bad man may have it in abundance.

Leaving therefore these amusements of the imagination to the vain and indolent, let us awake to nature and truth; and in a world from which we must so shortly be summoned, a world abounding with so many real scenes of heart-rending distress, as well as of vice and impiety, employ all our powers in relieving the one and in correcting the other; that when we have arrived at the borders of eternity, we may not be tormented with the awful reflection of having lived in vain.

If ever there was a period when poverty made a more forcible appeal than usual to the heart, it is unquestionably that which we have lately witnessed; the calamities of which, though greatly diminished by the auspicious event which we now celebrate, are far from being entirely removed. Poverty used in happier times to be discerned in a superior meanness of apparel and the total absence of ornament. We have seen its ravages reach the *man*, proclaiming themselves in the trembling step, in the dejected countenance, and the faded form. We have seen emaciated infants, no ruddiness in their cheeks, no sprightliness in their motions, while the eager and imploring looks of their mothers, reduced below the loud expressions of grief, have announced unutterable anguish and silent despair.

From the reflections which have been made on the peculiar nature of poverty, you will easily account for the prodigious stress which is laid on the duty of pecuniary

* The author alludes to Sterne, the whole tendency of whose writings is to degrade human nature, by resolving all our passions into a mere animal instinct, and that of the grossest sort. It was perfectly natural for such a writer to employ his powers in panegyrising an ass.

benevolence in the Old and New Testaments. In the former, God delighted in assuming the character of the patron of the poor and needy; in the latter, the short definition of the religion which he approves, *is to visit the fatherless and widow, and keep himself unspotted from the world.* He who knew what was in man, well knew that, since the entrance of sin, selfishness was become the epidemic disease of human nature; a malady which almost every thing tends to inflame, and the conquest of which is absolutely necessary, before we can be prepared for the felicity of heaven; that whatever leads us out of ourselves, whatever unites us to him and his creatures in pure love, is an important step towards the recovery of his image; and finally, that his church would consist for the most part of *the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*, whom he was resolved to shield from the contempt of all who respect his authority, by selecting them from the innumerable millions of mankind to be the peculiar representatives of himself.

Happy are they whose lives correspond to these benevolent intentions; who, looking beyond the transitory distinctions which prevail here, and will vanish at the first approach of eternity, honour God in his children, and Christ in his image. How much, on the contrary, are those to be pitied, in whatever sphere they move, who live to themselves, unmindful of the coming of their Lord! *When he shall come and shall not keep silence, when a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him*, every thing, it is true, will combine to fill them with consternation; yet, methinks neither the voice of the archangel, nor the trump of God, nor the dissolution of the elements, nor the face of the Judge itself, from which the heavens will flee away, will be so dismaying and terrible to these men as the sight of the poor members of Christ; whom having spurned and neglected in the days of their humiliation, they will then behold with amazement united to their Lord, covered with his glory, and seated on his throne. How will they be astonished to see them surrounded with so much majesty! How will they cast down their eyes in their

presence! How will they curse that gold, which will then eat their flesh as with fire, and that avarice, that indolence, that voluptuousness, which will entitle them to so much misery! You will then learn that the imitation of Christ is the only wisdom: you will then be convinced it is better to be endeared to the cottage, than admired in the palace; when to have wiped away the tears of the afflicted, and inherited the prayers of the widow and the fatherless, shall be found a richer patrimony than the favour of princes.

ACCOUNT OF

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,

FOR THE

RELIEF OF THE SICK AND AGED POOR,

INSTITUTED AT CAMBRIDGE, 1801.

Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor. Psalm xli. 1.
Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Matt. xxv. 40.

THAT benevolence is an habitual duty, arising out of our constitution as rational and social creatures, and enforced upon us by the most powerful motives as Christians, no one will deny. The various exertions of the humane and the pious, in private circles and in public institutions, are so many proofs of the truth of this sentiment; but notwithstanding those exertions, there is still ample room for enlargement. Those persons who are in the habit of visiting the cottages or the chambers of the poor, are too frequently the melancholy witnesses of that extreme poverty, pining sickness, and poignant distress, which energetically call for relief.

With the design of administering, in some degree, such relief, a number of persons have formed themselves into a Society, the nature and objects of which are such, that it

may, with the greatest truth, be said to *deserve*, and it can scarcely be doubted but it will *meet* with such encouragement as may render it a blessing to the poor of the town of CAMBRIDGE. It is likewise ardently hoped, that the Society will meet with such farther encouragement, that its benevolent exertions may not be confined to the town, but extended to the neighbouring villages.

The FIRST object of the Society is to afford PECUNIARY ASSISTANCE to the SICK and the AGED POOR. To select proper objects, and guard against the abuses attending indiscriminate relief, visitors will be appointed to examine and judge of the nature of every case, and report the same to a Committee of the Society.

The SECOND object of the Society is—The MORAL and RELIGIOUS improvement of the objects relieved. *A word spoken in season,* (says the wise man,) *how good is it!* The hour of affliction, the bed of sickness, afford the most seasonable opportunities for usefulness; and it is hoped, that the heart may in a more peculiar manner be open to the best of impressions at such a season, and when under a sense of obligation for relief already administered.

In a Society like the present, all distinctions of sects and parties are lost in the one general design of DOING GOOD; and the success which has attended societies, nearly similar, in different parts of this kingdom, and more particularly in the metropolis, in relieving the distress and ameliorating the condition of thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures, affords reason to hope, that under the divine blessing, similar success will attend the Society established in this town.

RULES.

I. Any person, of whatever denomination, age, or sex, disposed to assist this benevolent undertaking, may be admitted a Subscriber; each Subscriber, on admission, to pay *not less* than one shilling, and from two-pence per week to any sum such Subscriber may think proper.

II. That the business of the Society be managed by a Committee of fourteen persons, including the Treasurer and Secretary; five of whom shall be competent to transact business:—that the Committee be open to any member of the Society, who may think proper to attend. In case of any vacancy in the Committee, by death, or resignation, the remaining members of the Committee be empowered to fill up such vacancy.

III. That the Committee meet monthly, at each others' houses, to receive reports, consider of cases, appoint visitors, and audit their accounts.

IV. That there be an annual general meeting, of which due notice will be given, when the state of the Society shall be reported, and the Treasurer, Secretary, and Committee appointed, to manage the concerns thereof.

V. That the SICK and the AGED be esteemed the *only* objects of the compassion of this Society; and when the fund is reduced to the sum of five pounds, the cases of the sick alone shall be attended to.

VI. That no member be allowed to recommend a case, until three months after his or her subscription has commenced, nor, if four months in arrears, until such arrears be discharged, provided he or she has received notice of the same.

VII. That no case be received but from a Subscriber, who is expected to be well acquainted with the case recommended, and to report the particulars to one of the visitors.

VIII. That the Visitors be appointed to administer relief, and not the person who recommends the case.

IX. That no Subscribers, while they continue such, shall receive any relief from this Society, nor shall any of those who conduct the business thereof, receive any gratuity for their services.

The Committee consists of an equal number of Ladies and Gentlemen; and persons of both sexes are appointed as visitors in rotation.

Subscriptions and Donations are received by the Treasurer, Secretary, or any Member of the Committee.

At a General Meeting of the Society, held, agreeably to public notice, at Mr. Alderman IND's, on Monday, May 3, 1802:—It was resolved, That when the Annual Subscriptions of the Society amount to *Sixty* Pounds, and the Fund to *Thirty* Pounds, the Committee be empowered to extend relief to other distressed objects besides the SICK and the AGED.

THE SENTIMENTS PROPER TO THE PRESENT CRISIS:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

BRIDGE STREET, BRISTOL,

OCTOBER 19, 1803;

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

Uter esset, non uter imperaret. *Cicero.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME apology is due to the public for this discourse appearing so long after it was preached. The fact is, the writer was engaged on an exchange of services for a month with his highly esteemed friend, the Rev. Mr. Lowell, of Bristol, author of an excellent volume of Sermons on Practical Subjects, at the time it was delivered, and had no opportunity of writing it till he returned. As it touches entirely on permanent topics, except what relates to the threatened invasion, still impending over us, he knows not but it may be as suitable now as if it had appeared earlier. As it is, he commits it to the candour of the public. He has only to add, that the allusion to the effects of the tragic muse* should have been marked as a quotation, though the author knows not with certainty to whom to ascribe it. He believes it fell from the elegant pen of an illustrious female, Mrs. More.

* Page 135.

SHELFORD,
Nov. 30, 1803.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In this edition, the author has corrected those errors of the press, which in the former were very considerable. The Monthly Reviewers have founded a criticism entirely on one of them. The author had remarked, that infidelity was bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted christianity. The printer having omitted the word *corrupted*, the reviewers remark that they never found in their map of christianity any stagnant marshes. Having mentioned the Monthly Reviewers, he must be permitted to notice a most singular error into which they have been betrayed; that of supposing the author had confounded Aristotle with Mrs. More. It is well known to every one who has the smallest tincture of learning, that the great critic of antiquity represents the design of tragedy to be that of purifying the heart by pity and terror. It appeared to the author that infidelity, by the crimes and disorders it has produced in society, was not incapable of answering a similar purpose. He accordingly availed himself of the comparison; but it having occurred to him afterwards that he had read a similar passage in Mrs. More, he thought it right to notice this circumstance in an advertisement; in which he says, he apprehends the *allusion* to the tragic muse to belong to Mrs. More. It was not the opinion of its being the purpose of tragedy to purify the heart

by pity and terror, that he ascribed to that celebrated female; but *solely the allusion* to that opinion as illustrating the effect of infidelity. It is on this slender foundation, however, that the writer in the Monthly Review, with what design is best known to himself, has thought fit to represent him as ascribing to Mrs. More, as its author, a critical opinion which has been current for more than two thousand years. He is certain his words will not support any such construction, though he will not contend that he has expressed himself with all the clearness that might be wished.

He is sorry to find some passages towards the close of the sermon have given offence to persons whom he highly esteems. It has been objected, that the author has admitted to heaven a crowd of legislators, patriots, and heroes, whose title to that honour, on christian principles, is very equivocal. In reply to which, he begs it to be remembered that the New Testament teaches, that *God is no respecter of persons; that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him;* that we may be certain there will not be wanting in the innumerable assembly around the throne, some of the highest rank and of the most illustrious talents; and that the writer has qualified the character of those legislators and patriots, whom he has represented as being in heaven, with the epithet of *virtuous;* and this, after he had been at some *pains to explain what he comprehended in his idea of virtue.* He has been censured for attempting to animate the defenders of their country, by holding out the prospect of

immortality, should they fall in the contest; and it has been asked why, instead of amusing them with this phantom, not endeavour to convince them of the necessity of religious preparation for death, when he must be aware it is very possible for men to die fighting in defence of their country, and yet fall short of future happiness. The writer is, indeed, fully persuaded, that in the concerns of salvation, no reliance ought to be placed on a detached instance of virtuous conduct; that a solid piety is indispensably necessary, and that *without holiness no man can see the Lord.* But, after having employed great part of the preceding discourse in urging the necessity of repentance, he may surely be allowed for a moment to take it for granted that his admonitions have been attended to; and, without treading over the same ground, in an address to men who are supposed to be just entering the field, to advert to topics more immediately connected with military prowess. It was never his intention to place worldly on a level with religious considerations, or to confound the sentiments of honour with the dictates of duty. But, as the fear of death, and the love of fame, are both natural, and both innocent within certain limits, he was not aware there could be any impropriety, when he had already dwelt largely on religious topics, to oppose one natural sentiment to another. He who confines himself to such considerations, violates the character of the christian minister; he who neglects them entirely, is wanting to the duties of the present crisis. The writer has only to add on this head, that, in the addresses on

similar occasions in the Scriptures, there is rarely a greater mixture of religious topics, or more reserve in appealing to other motives, than is found here; so that, if he has erred, his error is countenanced by the highest, that is, by inspired, authority.

Finally, he has been censured for expressing, in such strong terms, his detestation of the character of Buonaparte. It has been said, that however just his representation may be, it is losing sight of the true design of a national fast, which is to confess and bewail our own sins, instead of inveighing against the sins of others. That this is the true end of a public fast, the writer is convinced; on which account he has expressly cautioned his readers against placing reliance on their supposed superiority in virtue to their enemies. What he has said of the character of Buonaparte is with an entirely different view; it is urged, not as a ground of security, but as a motive to the most vigorous resistance. In this view, it is impossible for it to be too deeply impressed. When a people are threatened with invasion, will it be affirmed that the personal character of the invader is of no consequence; and that it is not worth a moment's consideration whether he possess the virtuous moderation of a Washington, or the restless and insatiable ambition of a Buonaparte? Though hostile invasion is an unspeakable calamity in any situation, and under any circumstances, yet it is capable of as many modifications as the dispositions and designs of the invaders; and if in the present instance the crimes of our enemy supply the most cogent motives to resist-

ance, can it be wrong to turn his vices against himself; and, by imprinting a deep abhorrence of his perfidy and cruelty on the hearts of the people, to put them more thoroughly on their guard against their effects?

It may be thought a sermon on a fast-day should have comprehended a fuller enumeration of our national sins, and this was the author's design when he first turned his attention to the subject: but he was diverted from it by observing that these themes, from the press at least, seem to make no kind of impression; and that whatever the most skilful preacher can advance, is fastidiously repelled as stale and professional declamation. The people in general are settled into an indifference so profound, with respect to all such subjects, that the preacher who arraigns their vices in the most vehement manner, has no reason to be afraid of exciting their displeasure; but it is well, if, long before he has finished his reproofs, he has not lulled them to sleep. From a due consideration of the temper of the times, he therefore thought it expedient to direct the attention to what appeared to him the chief source of public degeneracy, rather than insist at large on particular vices. He has in this edition, in some places, expanded the illustration where it appeared defective, as well as corrected the gross errors of the press which disfigured the discourse; being desirous, ere it descends to that oblivion which is the natural exit of such publications, of presenting it for once in an amended form, that it may at least be decently interred.

A SERMON.

JEREMIAH viii. 6.

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

THOUGH we are well assured the Divine Being is attentive to the conduct of men at all times, yet it is but reasonable to believe he is peculiarly so whilst they are under his correcting hand. As *he does not willingly afflict the children of men*, he is wont to do it slowly, and at intervals, waiting, if we may so speak, to see whether the preceding chastisement will produce the sentiments which shall appease his anger, or those which shall confirm his resolution to punish. When sincere humiliation and sorrow for past offences takes place, his displeasure subsides, he relents and *repents himself of the evil.* Thus he speaks by the mouth of Jeremiah. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

We are this day assembled at the call of our Sovereign, to humble ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, under a sense of our sins, and to implore his interposition, that we may not be delivered into the hands of our enemies, nor fall a prey to the malice of those who hate us. It is surely, then, of the utmost consequence to see to it, that our humiliation be deep, our repentance sincere, and the dispositions we cherish,

as well as the resolutions we form, suitable to the nature of the crisis, and the solemnity of the occasion; such, in a word, as Omniscience will approve.

In the words of the text, the Lord reproaches the people of Israel with not speaking aright, and complains that, while he was waiting to hear the language of penitential sorrow and humiliation, he witnessed nothing but an insensibility to his reproofs, an obstinate perseverance in guilt, with a fatal eagerness to rush to their former courses. *He hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his iniquity, nor said, What have I done? But every one rushed to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

As the principles of the divine administration are invariable, and the situation of Great Britain, at this moment, not altogether unlike that of Israel at the time this portion of prophecy was penned, perhaps we cannot better improve the present solemnity, than by taking occasion, from the words before us, to point out some of those sentiments and views which appear in the present crisis not to be *right;* and, after exploding these, to endeavour to substitute more correct ones in their stead.

1. They who content themselves with tracing national judgments to their national causes, without looking higher, entertain a view of the subject very inadequate to the demands of the present season. When you have imputed to the effects of an unparalleled convulsion on the continent, to the relative situation of foreign powers, to the turbulent passions and insatiable ambition of an individual, the evils which threaten us, what have you done to mitigate those evils? What alleviation have you afforded to perplexity and distress? They still exist in all their force. Far be it from me to attempt to discourage political inquiry. An inquiry into the sources of great events, an attempt to develope the more hidden causes which influence, under God, the destiny of nations, is an exercise of the mental powers more noble than almost any other, inasmuch as it embraces the widest field, and grasps a chain whose links are the most numerous, complicated, and subtle. The most profound

political speculations, however, the most refined theories of government, though they establish the fame of their authors, will be found, perhaps, to have had very little influence on the happiness of nations. As the art of criticism never made an orator or a poet, though it enables us to judge of their merits, so the comprehensive speculation of modern times, which has reviewed and compared the manners and institutions of every age and country, has never formed a wise government or a happy people. It arrives too late for that purpose, since it owes its existence to an extensive survey of mankind, under a vast variety of forms, through all those periods of national improvement and decay, in which the happiest efforts of wisdom and policy have been already made. The welfare of a nation depends much less on the refined wisdom of the few, than on the manners and character of the many: and as moral and religious principles have the chief influence in forming that character, so an acknowledgment of the hand of God, a deep sense of his dominion, is amongst the first of those principles. While we attend to the operation of second causes, let us never forget that there is a Being placed above them, who can move and arrange them at pleasure, and in whose hands they never fail to accomplish the purposes of his unerring counsel. The honour of the Supreme Ruler requires that his supremacy should be acknowledged, his agency confessed; nor is there any thing which he more intends by his chastisements than to extort this confession, or any thing he more highly resents than an attempt to exclude him from the concerns of his own world. *Woe unto them* (saith Isaiah) *that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.** The same prophet complains, that while the hand of Jehovah was lifted up they would not see; but he adds, *they shall see.* If lighter chastisements

* Isaiah v. 11, 12.

will not suffice, he has heavier in reserve; if they despise his reproofs, he will *render his anger with fury, his rebukes with flames of fire.* He is resolved to overcome; and what must be the issue of a contest with Omnipotence, it is as easy to foresee as it is painful to contemplate.

2. They *speak not aright*, who, instead of placing their reliance on God for safety, repose only on an arm of flesh.—The perfect unanimity which prevails, the ardour to defend every thing dear to us, which is expressed by all classes; the sacrifices cheerfully made, the labours sustained, and the mighty preparations by sea and land, which the vigilance of government has set on foot to repel the enemy from our coasts, or insure his discomfiture should he arrive, must be highly satisfactory to every well-disposed mind. They afford, as far as human means can afford, a well-founded prospect of success. Though there is, on this account, no room to despond, but much, on the contrary, to lead us to anticipate a favourable issue to the contest; yet nothing, surely, can justify that language of extravagant boast, that proud confidence in our national force, without a dependence upon God, which, however fashionable it may be, is as remote from the dictates of true courage as of true piety. True courage is firm and unassuming; true piety, serious and humble. In the midst of all our preparations, we shall, if we are wise, repose our chief confidence in Him who has every element at his disposal; who can easily disconcert the wisest councils, confound the mightiest projects, and save, when he pleases, by many or by few. While the vanity of such a pretended reliance on Providence as supersedes the use of means is readily confessed, it is to be feared we are not sufficiently careful to guard against a contrary extreme, in its ultimate effects not less dangerous. It to depend on the interposition of Providence without human exertion, be to tempt God; to confide in an arm of flesh, without seeking his aid, is to deny him; the former is to be pitied for its weakness, the latter to be censured for its impiety; nor is it easy to say which

affords the worst omen of success. Let us avoid both these extremes; availing ourselves of all the resources which wisdom can suggest, or energy produce, let us still feel and acknowledge our absolute dependence upon God. With humble and contrite hearts, with filial confidence and affection, let us flee to his arms, that thus we may enjoy the united supports of reason and religion; and every principle, human and divine, may concur to assure us of our safety. Thus shall we effectually shun the denunciations so frequent and so terrible, contained in his holy word, against the vanity of human confidences. *Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.*

3. Their conduct is not to be approved, who, in the present crisis, indulge in *wanton* and *indiscriminate* censure of the measures of our rulers. I say *wanton* and *indiscriminate*, because the privilege of censuring, with moderation and decency, the measures of government, is essential to a free constitution; a privilege which can never lose its value in the eyes of the public, till it is licentiously abused. The temperate exercise of this privilege is a most useful restraint on those errors and excesses, to which the possession of power supplies a temptation. The free expression of the public voice is capable of overawing those who have nothing beside to apprehend; and the tribunal of public opinion is one whose decisions it is not easy for men in the most elevated stations to despise. To this we may add, that the unrestrained discussion of national affairs not only *gives weight* to the sentiments, but is eminently adapted to *enlighten the minds*, of a people; and, consequently, to increase that general fund of talent and information, from which the accomplishments, even of statesmen themselves, must be ultimately derived. While, therefore, we maintain this privilege with jealous care, let us be equally careful not to abuse it. There is a respect, in my apprehension, due to civil governors *on account of their office*, which we are not permitted to violate, even when we are under the necessity of blaming their measures. When the apostle Paul was betrayed into an

intemperate expression of anger against the Jewish High Priest, from an ignorance of the station he occupied, he was no sooner informed of this, than he apologized, and quoted a precept of the Mosaic law, which says, *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.* In agreement with which, the New Testament subjoins to the duty of fearing God, that of honouring the king; and frequently and emphatically inculcates submission to civil rulers, not so much from a fear of their power, as from a respect for their office.

The ancient prophets, it is true, in the immediate discharge of their functions, appear to have treated kings and princes with no sort of ceremony. But, before we establish their style into a precedent, let us recollect they were privileged persons, speaking expressly in the name of the Most High, who gave them his words, and invested them, for the moment, with a portion of his majesty.

Apart from the personal character of rulers, which are fluctuating and variable, you will find the apostles continually enjoin respect to government, *as government*, as a permanent ordinance of God, susceptible of various modifications from human wisdom, but essential, under some form or other, to the existence of society; and affording a representation, faint and inadequate, it is true, but still a representation, of the dominion of God over the earth. The wisdom of resting the duty of submission on this ground is obvious. The possession of office forms a plain and palpable distinction, liable to no ambiguity or dispute. Personal merits, on the contrary, are easily contested, so that if the obligation of obedience were founded on these, it would have no kind of force, nor retain any sort of hold on the conscience; the bonds of social order might be dissolved by an epigram or a song. The more liberal sentiments of respect for institutions being destroyed, nothing would remain to insure tranquillity, but a servile fear of men. In the absence of those sentiments, as the mildest exertion of authority would be felt as an injury, authority would soon cease to be mild; and princes would have

no alternative but that of governing their subjects with the severe jealousy of a master over slaves impatient of revolt: so narrow is the boundary which separates a licentious freedom from a ferocious tyranny! How incomparably more noble, salutary, and just, are the maxims the apostles lay down on this subject. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever resisteth, therefore, the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.* We shall do well to guard against any system which would withdraw the duties we owe to our rulers and to society from the jurisdiction of conscience; that principle of the mind, whose prerogative it is to prescribe to every other, and to pronounce that definitive sentence from which there is no appeal. A good man is accustomed to acquiesce in the idea of his duties as an ultimate object, without inquiring at every step why he should perform them, or amusing himself with imagining cases and situations in which they would be liable to limitations and exceptions. Instead of being curious after these, (for I do not deny that such exceptions exist,) let the great general duty of submission to civil authority be engraven on our hearts, wrought into the very habit of the mind, and make a part of our elementary morality.

At this season especially, when unanimity is so requisite, every endeavour to excite discontent, by reviling the character, or depreciating the talents, of those who are intrusted with the administration, is highly criminal. Without suspicion of flattery, we may be permitted to add, that their zeal in the service of their country cannot be questioned; that the vast preparations they have made for our defence claim our gratitude; and

that if, in a situation so arduous, and in the management of affairs so complicated and difficult, they have committed mistakes, they are amply entitled to a candid construction of their measures.

Having been detained by these reflections somewhat longer than was intended, it is high time to return to those religious considerations which are more immediately appropriate to the present season. I therefore proceed to add,

4. That they appear to entertain mistaken sentiments, who rely with too much confidence for success on our supposed superiority in virtue to our enemies. Such a confidence betrays inattention to the actual conduct of Providence. Wherever there is conscious guilt, there is room to apprehend punishment; nor is it for the criminal to decide where the merited punishment shall first fall. The cup of divine displeasure is, indeed, presented successively to guilty nations, but it by no means invariably begins with those who have run the greatest career in guilt. On the contrary, *judgment* often *begins at the house of God;* and he frequently chastises his servants with severity before he proceeds to the destruction of his enemies. He assured Abraham, his seed should be afflicted in Egypt for four hundred years, and that after their expiration, *the nation that afflicted them he would judge.* The Assyrian monarchs, blind and impious idolaters, were permitted for a long period to oppress his chosen people; after which, to use his own words, *he punished the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Babylon;* and having accomplished his design in their correction, cast the rod into the fire. His conduct, on such occasions, resembles that of a parent, who, full of solicitude for the welfare of his children, animadverts upon faults in *them*, which he suffers to pass without notice in persons for whom he is less interested. Let us adore both the goodness and severity of God. The punishments which are designed to amend, are inflicted with comparative vigilance and speed; those which are meant to destroy are usually long suspended, while the devoted victims pass on with seeming impunity.

But, independent of this consideration, that superiority in virtue which is claimed, may be neither so great, nor so certain, as we are ready at first to suppose. To decide on the comparative guilt of two individuals, much more of two nations, demands a more comprehensive knowledge of circumstances than we are usually able to obtain. To settle a question of this sort, it is not enough barely to inspect the manners of each; for the quality of actions, considered in themselves, is one thing; and the comparative guilt of the persons to whom they belong, is another. Before we can determine such a question, it is necessary to weigh and estimate the complicated influences to which they are exposed, the tendency of all their institutions, their respective degrees of information, and the comparative advantages and disadvantages under which they are placed. And who is equal to such a survey, but the Supreme Judge, to whom it belongs to decide on the character both of nations and individuals?

Our enemies, it is true, in the moments of anarchy and madness, treated the religion of Jesus with an ostentation of insult; but it was not till that religion had been disguised, and almost concealed from their view under a veil of falsehoods and impostures. The religion they rejected, debased by foreign infusions, mingled with absurd tenets, trifling superstitions, and cruel maxims, retained scarce any traces of the *truth as it is in Jesus.* The best of men were compelled to flee their country to avoid its persecuting fury, while the *souls under the altar* were employed day and night in accusing it before God. Religious inquiry was suppressed, the perusal of the word of God discountenanced, or rather prohibited, and that book, to loose whose seals the Lamb condescended to be slain, impiously closed by those who styled themselves its ministers. In this situation, it is less surprising if the body of the people,* misled by pretended philosophers, lost

* The author begs this remark may be understood to apply to the French people only, and not by any means to their infidel leaders. Of the infidelity of the latter there needs no other solution than the *They loved darkness rather than light, because their*

sight of the feeble glimmerings of light which shone in the midst of so much obscurity. How far these considerations may extenuate, before the searcher of hearts, the guilt of our enemies, it remains with him to determine. It is certain, our guilt is accompanied with no such extenuation. With us the darkness has long been past, and the true light has arisen upon us. We have long possessed the clearest display of divine truth, together with the fullest liberty of conscience. The mysteries of the gospel have been unveiled, and its sanctifying truths pressed on the conscience by those *who, having received such a ministry*, know it to be their duty *to use great plainness of speech.*

The language of invective, it is acknowledged, should be as carefully avoided in dispensing the word of God as that of adulation; but may we not, without reprehension, ask whether it is not a melancholy truth, that many of us have continued in the midst of all this light, unchanged and impenitent; that if our enemies, with frantic impiety, renounced the forms of religion, we remain destitute of the power; and that, if they abandoned the christian name, the name is nearly the whole of christianity to which we can pretend? Still we are ready perhaps to exclaim, with the people of Israel in the context, *We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us!* Let us hear the prophet's reply. *Surely in vain hath he made it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.* That law is most emphatically in vain, which is the subject of boast without being obeyed. That dispensation of religion, however perfect, is in vain, which cherishes the pride, without reforming the manners of a people. Were we, indeed, a religious people, were the traces of christianity as visible in our lives as they are in our creeds and confessions, we might derive solid support from the comparison of ourselves with others; but if the contrary be the fact, and *there are with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God,* it will be our wisdom to relinquish this plea; and instead of boasting our superior virtue, to lie low in humiliation and repentance.

5. General lamentations and acknowledgments of the

corruptions of the age, be they ever so well founded, fall very short of the real duties of this season.—It is not difficult, however painful to a good mind, to descant on the luxury, the venality, the impiety of the age, the irreligion of the rich, the immorality of the poor, and the general forgetfulness of God which pervades all classes. Such topics it would be utterly improper to exclude: but to dwell on these alone, answers very little purpose. The sentiments they excite are too vague and indistinct to make a lasting impression. To invest ourselves with an imaginary character, to represent the nation to which we belong, and combining into one group the vices of the times, to utter loud lamentations, or violent invectives, is an easy task.

But this, whatever it be, is not repentance. After bewailing in this manner the sins of others, it is possible to continue quite unconcerned about our own. He who has been thus employed, may have been merely acting a part; uttering confessions in which he never meant to take a personal share. He would be mortally offended, perhaps, to have it suspected that he himself had been guilty of any one of the sins he has been deploring, or that he had contributed in the smallest degree to draw down the judgments he so solemnly deprecates. All has been transacted under a feigned character. Instead of *repenting himself of his iniquity, or saying, What have I done?* he secretly prides himself on his exemption from the general stain; and all the advantage he derives from his humiliations and confessions, is to become more deeply enamoured of the perfections of what he supposes his real character. To such I would say, you are under a dangerous delusion; and the manner in which you perform the duties of this season completes that delusion. Your repentance, your feigned, your theatrical repentance, tends to fix you in impenitence, and your humiliation to make you proud. Whatever opinion you may entertain of the character of others, your chief concern is at home. When you have broken off your own sins by righteousness, you may, with a more perfect propriety, deplore the sins of the

nation; you may intercede for it in your prayers, and, within the limits of your sphere, edify it by your example; but till you have taken this first, this necessary step, you have done nothing; and should the whole nation follow your example, and copy the spirit of your devotion, we should, after all, remain an impenitent, and finally a ruined people.

Allow me here, though it may be a digression, to endeavour the correction of a mistake, which appears to me to have greatly perplexed, as well as abridged, the duties of similar seasons to the present. The mistake to which I allude respects the true idea of *national sin*. Many seem to take it for granted that nothing can justly be deemed a *national sin*, but what has the sanction of the legislature, or is committed under public authority. When they hear, therefore, of national sins, they instantly revolve in their minds something which they apprehend to be criminal in the conduct of public affairs. That iniquity when established by law is more conspicuous, that it tends to a more general corruption, and by poisoning the streams of justice at their source, produces more extensive mischief than under any other circumstances, it is impossible to deny. In a country, moreover, where the people have a voice in the government, the corruption of their laws must first have inhered, and become inveterate in their manners.

Such corruption is therefore not so much an *instance* as a *monument* of national degeneracy; but it by no means follows that this is the only just idea of national sins. National sins are the sins of the nation. The system which teaches us to consider a people as acting merely through the medium of its prince or legislature, however useful or necessary to adjust the intercourse of nations with each other, is too technical, too artificial, too much of a compromise with the imperfection essential to human affairs, to enter into the views, or regulate the conduct, of the Supreme Being. He sees things as they are; and as the greater part of the crimes committed in every country are perpetrated by its inhabitants in their individual character, it is these, though not to the

exclusion of others, which chiefly provoke the divine judgments.

To consider national sins as merely comprehending the vices of rulers, or the iniquities tolerated by law, is to place the duties of such a season as this in a very *invidious* and a very *inadequate* light. It is to render them invidious: for upon this principle our chief business on such occasions is, to single out for attack those whom we are commanded to obey, to descant on public abuses, and to hold up to detestation and abhorrence the supposed delinquencies of the government under which we are placed. How far such a conduct tends to promote that broken and contrite heart which is heaven's best sacrifice, it requires no great sagacity to discover.

It is, moreover, to exhibit a most *inadequate* view of the duties of this season. It confines humiliation and confession to a mere scantling of the sins which pollute a nation. Under the worst governments (to say nothing of our own) the chief perversions of right are not found in courts of justice, nor the chief outrages on virtue in the laws, nor the greatest number of atrocities in the public administration. Civil government, the great antidote which the wisdom of man has applied to the crimes and disorders that spring up in society, can scarcely ever become, in no free country at least is it possible for it to become, *itself* the chief crime and disorder. It may, on occasion, prescribe *particular things* that are wrong, and sometimes reward where it ought to punish; but unless it bent its force, for the most part, to the encouragement of virtue and the suppression of vice; unless the general spirit of its laws were in unison with the dictates of conscience, it would soon fall to pieces from intestine weakness and disorder.

A last appeal, in all moral questions, lies to the Scriptures, where you will invariably find the prophets, in their boldest paintings of national vice, in their severest denunciations of divine anger, are so far from confining their representation to the conduct of rulers, that they are seldom mentioned in comparison of the people. Their attention is chiefly occupied in depicting the cor-

ruptions which prevailed in the several classes of the community, among which the crimes of princes and judges are most severely reprehended, not as representatives, but as parts of the whole. They knew nothing of that refinement by which a people are at liberty to transfer their vices to their rulers. To confirm this remark, by adducing all the instances the prophecies afford, would be to quote a great part of the Old Testament: it is sufficient to refer you to the twenty-second chapter of Ezekiel, where, after portraying the manners of the age with the peculiar vehemence of style which distinguished that holy prophet, he closes his description with these remarkable words: *And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.*

Let us not deceive ourselves with vain words. The just displeasure of God, as it will by no means spare the great, when they are criminal and impenitent, so neither is it excited by their wickedness alone. It is a fire supplied from innumerable sources, to which every crime contributes its quota; and which every portion of guilt, wherever it is found, causes to burn with augmented violence.

Having thus endeavoured to expose those grounds of confidence which appear replete with danger, it will not be necessary to dwell long on the remaining part of the subject. To be aware of the several wrong paths into which we are liable to be misled, is the principal requisite to the finding out that which is alone the true and right one.

The first duty to which our situation summons us, is a devout acknowledgment of the hand of God. To this, whatever be the instruments employed, religion instructs us ultimately to refer national calamities as well as national blessings. *That the Lord reigns*, is one of those truths which lie at the very basis of piety; nor is there any more consoling. It fills the heart, under a right impression of it, with a cheerful hope, and unruffled tranquillity, amidst the changes and trials of

life, which we shall look for in vain from any other quarter. It is this chiefly which formed and distinguished the character of those who are emphatically said to have *walked with God*. Important as this disposition is, under all circumstances, it is what more especially suits the present crisis, and which the events we have witnessed are so eminently calculated to impress. The Psalmist accounts for the wicked's refusing to seek after God, from their having no changes; and certainly an uninterrupted series of prosperity is not favourable to piety. But if *we* forget God, we cannot plead even this slight extenuation; for the times that are *passing over us*, in the solemn phrase of Scripture, are eventful beyond all former example or conception. The fearful catastrophes, the strange vicissitudes, the sudden revolutions of fortune, which, thinly scattered heretofore over a long tract of ages, poets and historians have collected, and exhibited to the terror and the commiseration of mankind, have crowded upon us with so strange a rapidity, and thickened so fast, that they have become perefectly familiar, and are almost numbered among ordinary events. Astonishment has exhausted itself; and whatever occurs, we cease to be surprised. In short, every thing around us, in the course of a few years, is so changed, that did not the stability of the material, form a contrast to the fluctuations of the moral and political world, we might be tempted to suppose we had been removed to another state, or that all those things that have happened were but the illusions of fancy, and the visions of the night. How consoling, at such a season, to look up to that Being, *who is a very present help in trouble, the dwelling-place of all generations;* who changes all things, and is himself unchanged! And, independent of its impiety, how cruel is that philosophy which, under pretence of superior illumination, by depriving us of this resource, would leave us exposed to the tossings of a tempestuous ocean, without compass, without solace, and without hope!

But besides this acknowledgment of the general administration of the Deity, it behoves us to feel and con-

fess, in national calamities, the tokens of his displeasure. The evils which overtake nations are the just judgements of the Almighty. I am perfectly aware of the disadvantages under which we labour, when we insist on this topic, from its being so trite and familiar. Instead ot troubling you with a general, and, I fear, unavailing descant on the manners of the age, I shall, therefore, content myself with calling your attention to a very few of what appear to me the most alarming symptoms of national degeneracy. Here we shall not insist so much on the progress of infidelity (though much to be deplored), as on an evil, to which, if we are not greatly mistaken, that progress is chiefly to be ascribed: I mean a gradual departure from the peculiar truths, maxims, and spirit of Christianity. Christianity, issuing perfect and entire from the hands of its Author, will admit of no mutilations nor improvements; it stands most secure on its own basis; and without being indebted to foreign aids, supports itself best by its own internal vigour. When, under the pretence of simplifying it, we attempt to force it into a closer alliance with the most approved systems of philosophy, we are sure to contract its bounds, and to diminish its force and authority over the consciences of men. It is dogmatic; not capable of being advanced with the progress of science, but fixed and immutable. We may not be able to perceive the use or necessity of some of its discoveries, but they are not on this account the less binding on our faith; just as there are many parts of nature,* whose purposes we are at a loss to explore, of which if any person were bold enough

* "We ought not (says the great Bacon) to attempt to draw down or submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth. In this part of knowledge, touching divine philosophy, I am so far from noting any deficiency, that I rather note an excess; whereto I have digressed, because of the extreme prejudice which both religion and philosophy have received from being *commixed together*, as that which undoubtedly will make an heretical religion and a fabulous philosophy."

This observation appears to me to deserve the most profound meditation; and lest the remarks on this subject should appear presumptuous from so inconsiderable a person, I thought it requisite to fortify myself by so great an authority.

to arraign the propriety, it would be sufficient to reply that God made them. They are both equally the works of God, and both equally partake of the mysteriousness of their Author. This *integrity* of the Christian faith has been insensibly impaired; and the simplicity of mind with which it should be embraced, gradually diminished. While the outworks of the sanctuary have been defended with the utmost ability, its interior has been too much neglected, and the fire upon the altar suffered to languish and decay. The truths and mysteries which distinguished the christian from all other religions, have been little attended to by some, totally denied by others; and while infinite efforts have been made, by the utmost subtlety of argumentation, to establish the truth and authenticity of revelation, few have been exerted in comparison to show what it really contains. The doctrines of the fall and of redemption, which are the two grand points on which the Christian dispensation hinges, have been too much neglected. Though it has not yet become the fashion (God forbid it ever should!) to deny them, we have been too much accustomed to confine the mention of them to oblique hints, and distant allusions. They are too often reluctantly conceded rather than warmly inculcated, as though they were the weaker or less honourable parts of christianity, from which we were in haste to turn away our eyes, although it is in reality these very truths which have in every age inspired the devotion of the church, and the rapture of the redeemed. This alienation from the distinguishing truths of our holy religion accounts for a portentous peculiarity among christians, their being ashamed of a book which they profess to receive as the word of God. The votaries of all other religions regard their supposed sacred books with a devotion which consecrates their errors, and makes their very absurdities venerable in their eyes. They glory in that which is their shame: we are ashamed of that which is our glory. Indifference and inattention to the truths and mysteries of revelation, have led, by an easy transition, to a dislike and neglect of the book which contains them; so that, in a christian country, nothing is thought so vulgar as a

serious appeal to the Scriptures; and the candidate for fashionable distinction would rather betray a familiar acquaintance with the most impure writers, than with the words of Christ and his apostles. Yet we complain of the growth of infidelity, when nothing less could be expected than that some should declare themselves infidels, where so many had completely forgot they were christians. They who sow the seed can with very ill grace complain of the abundance of the crop; and when we have ourselves ceased to abide in the words and maintain the honour of the Saviour, we must not be surprised at seeing some advance a step further, by openly declaring they are none of his. The consequence has been such as might be expected,—an increase of profaneness, immorality, and irreligion.

The traces of piety have been wearing out more and more, from our conversation, from our manners, from our popular publications, from the current literature of the age. In proportion as the maxims and spirit of christianity have declined, infidelity has prevailed in their room; for infidelity is, in reality, nothing more than a noxious spawn (pardon the metaphor) bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted christianity.

A lax theology is the natural parent of a lax morality. The peculiar motives, accordingly, by which the inspired writers enforce their moral lessons, the love of God and the Redeemer, concern for the honour of religion, and gratitude for the inestimable benefits of the christian redemption, have no place in the fashionable systems of moral instruction.* The motives almost exclusively urged are such as take their rise from the present state, founded on reputation, on honour, on health, or on the tendency of the things recommended to promote, under some form or other, the acquisition of worldly advantages. Thus even morality itself, by dissociating it from religion, is made to cherish the love of the world, and to bar

* If the reader wishes for a further statement and illustration of these melancholy facts, he may find it in Mr. Wilberforce's celebrated book on religion; an inestimable work, which has, perhaps, done more than any other to rouse the insensibility and augment the piety of the age.

the heart more effectually against the approaches of piety.

Here I cannot forbear remarking a great change which has taken place in the whole manner of reasoning on the topics of morality and religion, from what prevailed in the last century, and, as far as my information extends, in any preceding age. This, which is an age of revolutions, has also produced a strange revolution in the method of viewing these subjects, the most important by far that can engage the attention of man. The simplicity of our ancestors, nourished by "the sincere milk of the word," rather than by the tenets of a disputatious philosophy, was content to let morality remain on the firm basis of the dictates of conscience and the will of God. They considered virtue as something *ultimate*, as bounding the mental prospect. They never supposed for a moment there was anything to which it stood merely in the relation of a *means*, or, that within the narrow confines of this momentary state any thing great enough could be found to be its *end* or *object*. It never occurred to their imagination, that that religion which professes to render us superior to the world, is in reality nothing more than an instrument to procure the temporal, the physical good of individuals, or of society. In their view, it had a nobler destination; it looked forward to eternity: and if ever they appear to have assigned it any end or object beyond itself, it was a union with its Author, in the perpetual fruition of God. They arranged these things in the following order:—Religion, comprehending the love, fear, and service of the Author of our being, they placed first; social morality, founded on its dictates, confirmed by its sanctions, next; and the mere physical good of society they contemplated as subordinate to both. Every thing is now reversed. The pyramid is inverted: the first is last, and the last first. Religion is degraded from its pre-eminence, into the mere hand-maid of social morality; social morality into an instrument of advancing the welfare of society; and the world is all in all. Nor have we deviated less from the example of antiquity than from that of our pious forefathers. The philosophers of

antiquity, in the absence of superior light, consulted with reverence the permanent principles of nature, the dictates of conscience, and the best feelings of the heart, which they employed all the powers of reason and eloquence to unfold, to adorn, to enforce; and thereby formed a luminous commentary *on the law written on the heart.* The virtue which they inculcated grew out of the stock of human nature: it was a warm and living virtue. It was the moral man, possessing in every limb and feature, in all its figure and movements, the harmony, dignity, and variety which belong to the human form: an effort of unassisted nature to restore that image of God, which sin had mutilated and defaced. Imperfect, as might be expected, their morality was often erroneous; but in its great outlines it had all the stability of the human constitution, and its fundamental principles were coeval and coexistent with human nature. There could be nothing fluctuating and arbitrary in its more weighty decisions, since it appealed every moment to *the man within the breast:* it pretended to nothing more than to give voice and articulation to the inward sentiments of the heart, and conscience echoed to its oracles. This, wrought into different systems, and under various modes of illustration, was the general mode which morality exhibited from the creation of the world till our time. In this state revelation found it; and, correcting what was erroneous, supplying what was defective, and confirming what was right by its peculiar sanctions, superadded a number of supernatural truths and holy mysteries. How is it, that on a subject on which men have thought deeply from the moment they began to think, and where, consequently, whatever is entirely and fundamentally new, must be fundamentally false; how is it, that in contempt of the experience of past ages, and of all precedents human and divine, we have ventured into a perilous path which no eye has explored, no foot has trod, and have undertaken, after the lapse of six thousand years, to *manufacture* a morality of our own, to decide by a cold calculation of interest, by a ledger-book of profit and of loss, the preference of truth to falsehood, of piety to

blasphemy, and of humanity and justice to treachery and blood?

In the science of morals we are taught by this system to consider nothing as yet done; we are invited to erect a fresh fabric on a fresh foundation. All the elements and sentiments which entered into the essence of virtue before, are melted down and cast into a new mould. Instead of appealing to any internal principle, every thing is left to calculation, and determined by expediency. In executing this plan, the jurisdiction of conscience is abolished, her decisions are classed with those of a superannuated judge, and the determination of moral causes is adjourned from the interior tribunal to the noisy forum of speculative debate. Every thing, without exception, is made an affair of calculation, under which are comprehended, not merely the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, but even the love and adoration which the Supreme Being claims at our hands. His claims are set aside, or suffered to lie in abeyance, until it can be determined how far they can be admitted on the principles of expediency, and in what respect they may interfere with the acquisition of temporal advantages. Even here, nothing is yielded to the suggestions of conscience, nothing to the movements of the heart: all is dealt out with a sparing hand, under the stint and measure of calculation. Instead of being allowed to "love God with all our heart, and all our strength, the first and great commandment," the portion of love assigned him is weighed out with the utmost scrupulosity, and the supposed excess more severely censured than the real deficiency.

Thus, by a strange inversion, the *indirect influence* of christianity, in promoting the temporal good of mankind, is mistaken for its *principal end;* the skirts of her robe are confounded with her body, and the *powers of the world to come*, instead of raising our thoughts and contemplations from earth to heaven, from the creature to the Creator, are made subservient to the advancement of secular interests and passions. How far these sentiments accord with the dictates of inspiration, the most unlettered

christian may easily decide. *Love not the world*, said the disciple who leaned on the breast of his Lord, *neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Such was the idea entertained by an inspired apostle of christian virtue. Let us now turn to the modern philosopher. Virtue, he will inform us (including the whole sum of our duties), is merely an expedient for promoting the interests and advantages of the present world; of that world, which, in the eyes of John, was passing away, and whose value he so solemnly depreciates. What admirable consistency! What elevated theology! If we can suppose this holy apostle acquainted with what passes on earth, what pleasure it must afford his glorified spirit, to find his sentiments so well understood, and so faithfully interpreted!

In former times it was supposed that one of the most effectual means of improvement in virtue was, the moral culture of the heart; and *to keep it with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life*, was thought an advice deserving the most serious attention. To examine frequently the state of the conscience, and to check the first risings of disorder there, was judged to be of the last importance.

It is easy to see how this moral discipline must fare under the doctrine of expediency, a doctrine which teaches man to be looking continually abroad: a doctrine which not only justifies, but enjoins, a distrust of the suggestions of the inward monitor; which will not permit the best feelings of the heart, its clearest dictates, its finest emotions, to have the smallest influence over the conduct; and, instead of yielding any thing to their direction, cites them at its bar.

As this fashion of reducing every moral question to a calculation of expedience is a most important innovation, it would be strange if it had not produced a change in the manners of society. In fact, it *has* produced an entirely new cast of character, equally remote from the licentious gaiety of high life, and the low profligacy which

falls under the lash of the law: a race of men distinguished by a calm and terrible ferocity, resembling Cæsar in this only, that, as it was said of him, they have come with sobriety to the ruin of their country. The greatest crimes no longer issue from the strongest passions, but from the coolest head. Vice and impiety have made a new conquest, and have added the regions of speculation to their dominion. The patrons of impurity and licentiousness have put on the cloak of the philosopher: maxims the most licentious have found their way into books of pretended morality, and have been inculcated with the airs of a moral sage.* The new doctrine having withdrawn the attention from all internal sentiments, as well as destroyed their authority, the distinction between right and wrong was easily lost sight of, the boundaries of vice and virtue confounded, and the whole substance of morals fell a prey to contending disputants. Nor is this the only or the worst consequence which has followed. A callous indifference to all moral distinctions is an almost inseparable effect of the familiar application of this theory. Virtue is no longer contemplated as the object of any particular *sentiment* or *feeling*, but solely with regard to its effects on society: it is what it *produces*, not what *it is*, that is alone considered, just as an accountant is indifferent to the *shape* and *appearance* of the figures, and attends simply to their amount. Crimes and virtues are equally *candidates* for approbation, nor must the heart betray the least preference, which would be to prejudge the cause; but must maintain a sacred neutrality, till Expedience, whose hand never trembles in the midst of the greatest horrors, has weighed in her impartial balance their consequences and effects. In the mean time, they are equally *candidates*, we assert it again, for our approbation, and equally entitled to it, provided the passions can be deceived into an opinion, and this is not difficult, that they will come to the same thing at the foot of the account. Hence that intrepidity in guilt, which has cased the hearts of the greatest adepts in this

* The unholy speculations of Mr. Godwin were founded entirely on this basis.

system, as with triple brass. Its seeds were sown by some of these with an unsparing hand in France, a congenial soil, where they produced a thick vegetation. The consequences were soon felt. The fabric of society tottered to its base, the earth shook under their feet; the heavens were involved in darkness, and a voice more audible than thunder called upon them to desist. But, unmoved amidst the uproar of elements, undismayed by that voice which astonishes nature and appals the guilty, these men continued absorbed in their calculations. Instead of revering the judgements, or confessing the finger of God, they only made more haste (still on the principle of expediency) to desolate his works, and destroy his image, as if they were apprehensive the shades of a premature night might fall and cover their victims!

But it is time to conclude this discussion, which has, perhaps, already fatigued by its length. I cannot help expressing my apprehension, that this desecration of virtue, this incessant domination of physical over moral ideas, of ideas of expedience over those of right, having already dethroned religion, and displaced virtue from her ancient basis, will, if it is suffered to proceed, ere long shake the foundation of states, and endanger the existence of the civilized world. Should it ever become popular; should it ever descend from speculation into common life, and become the practical morality of the age, we may apply to such a period the awful words of Balaam; *Who shall live when God doth this?* No imagination can portray, no mind can grasp its horrors; nor, when the angel in the Apocalypse, to whom the keys are intrusted, shall be commissioned to open the bottomless pit, will it send forth a thicker cloud of pestilential vapour. If the apparent simplicity of this system be alleged in its favour, I would say, it is the simplicity of meanness, a simplicity which is its shame, a daylight which reveals its beggary. If an air of obscurity, on the contrary, is objected against that of better times, let it be remembered that every science has its *ultimate questions*, boundaries which cannot be passed; and that if these occur earlier in morals than in other inquiries, it

is the natural result of the immensity of the subject, which touching human nature in every point, and surrounding it on all sides, renders it difficult, or rather impossible, to trace it in all its relations, and view it in all its extent. Meanwhile, the shades which envelope, and will perhaps always envelope it in some measure, are not without their use, since they teach the two most important lessons we can learn,—the vanity of our reason, and the grandeur of our destiny.

It is not improbable some may be offended at the warmth and freedom of these remarks: my apology, however, rests on the infinite importance of the subject, my extreme solicitude to impress what appear to me right sentiments respecting it, together with the consideration, that the confidence which ill becomes the innovators of yesterday, however able, may be pardoned in the defenders, however weak, of a system which has stood the test and sustained the virtue of two thousand years.* Let

* The system which founds morality on utility, an utility, let it be *always* remembered, confined to the purposes of the present world, issued with ill omen from the school of infidelity. It was first broached, I believe, certainly first brought into general notice, by Mr. Hume, in his Treatise on Morals, which he himself pronounced *incomparably the best* he ever wrote. It was incomparably the best for his purpose; nor is it easy to imagine a mind so acute as his did not see the effect it would have in setting morality and religion afloat, and substituting for the stability of principle the looseness of speculation and opinion. It has since been rendered popular by a succession of eminent writers; by one especially (I doubt not with intentions very foreign from those of Mr. Hume), whose great services to religion in other respects, together with my high reverence for his talents, prevent me from naming him. This venerable author, it is probable, little suspected to what lengths the principle would be carried, or to what purposes it would be applied in other hands. Had he foreseen this, I cannot but imagine he would have spared this part of his acute speculations.

We have, happily, preserved to us, from antiquity, two complete Treatises on Morals, in which the authors profess to give us a complete view of our duties; the one composed by the greatest master of reason, the other of eloquence, the world ever saw. The first of these has distinguished, classified, and arranged the elements of *social morality*, which is all he could reach in the absence of revelation, with that acuteness, subtlety, and precision, for which he was so eminently distinguished. Whoever attentively peruses his Treatise, the Nicomachian Morals, I mean, will find a perpetual reference to the inward sentiments of the breast. He builds every thing on the human constitution. He all along takes it for granted, that there is a moral impress on the

us return, then, to the safe and sober paths of our ancestors; adhering, in all moral questions, to the dictates of conscience, regulated and informed by the divine word; happy to enjoy, instead of sparks of our own kindling, the benefit of those luminaries which, placed in the moral firmament by a potent hand, have guided the church from the beginning, in her mysterious sojourn to eternity. *Stand in the way, and see; and ask for the old path, which is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls.*

Instead of demolishing the temple of christian virtue, from a presumptuous curiosity to inspect its foundations, let us rejoice that they are laid too deep for our scrutiny. Let us *worship* in it; and, along with the *nations of them that are saved, walk in its light.*

Having endeavoured to point out the source of our degeneracy, in a departure from the doctrines and spirit of christianity, I hasten to despatch the remainder of this discourse; nor will it detain you long.

mind, to which, without looking abroad, we may safely appeal. In a word, Aristotle never lost the moralist in the accountant. He has been styled the interpreter of Nature, and has certainly shown himself a most able commentator on the *law written on the heart*. For Cicero, in all his philosophical works, as well as in his Offices, where he treats more directly on these subjects, he shows the most extreme solicitude, as though he had a prophetic glance of what was to happen, to keep the moral and natural world apart, to assert the supremacy of virtue, and to recognize those sentiments and vestiges from which he educes, with the utmost elevation, the *contempt of human things*. How humiliating the consideration, that, with superior advantages, our moral systems should be infinitely surpassed in warmth and grandeur by those of Pagan times; and that the most jejune and comfortless that ever entered the mind of man, and the most abhorrent from the spirit of religion, should have ever become popular in a christian country! This departure from the precedents of antiquity will not, by those who are capable of forming a judgement, be easily imputed to the superiority of our talents; it is rather the result of that tendency to *degradation* which has long marked our progress. Along with the simplicity of faith and a reverence for the Scriptures, our respect for the dignity (rightly understood) of human nature, and tenderness for its best interests, have been gradually impaired. A fearlessness of consequences, a hardihood of mind, a disposition to sacrifice every thing to originality, or to a pretended philosophical precision, have succeeded in their place. This, in my humble opinion, has been the great bane of modern speculation, and has rendered so much of it wild, ferocious, and destructive.

Whoever has paid attention to the manners of the day, must have perceived a remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms, in which we have receded more and more from the spirit of christianity. Of this the term employed to denote a lofty sentiment of personal superiority supplies an obvious instance. In the current language of the times, *pride* is scarcely ever used but in a favourable sense. It will perhaps, be thought the mere change of a term is of little consequence; but, be it remembered that any remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms, betrays a proportionable change in the ideas and feelings they are intended to denote. As pride has been transferred from the list of vices to that of virtues, so humility, as a natural consequence, has been excluded, and is rarely suffered to enter into the praise of a character we wish to commend; although it was the leading feature in that of the Saviour of the world, and is still the leading characteristic of his religion; while there is no vice, on the contrary, against which the denunciations are so frequent as pride. Our conduct in this instance is certainly rather extraordinary, both in what we have embraced, and in what we have rejected; and it will surely be confessed, we are somewhat unfortunate in having selected that vice as a particular object of approbation, which God had already selected as the especial mark at which he aims the thunder-bolts of his vengeance.

Another symptom of degeneracy appears in the growing disregard to the external duties of religion; the duties more especially of the Lord's-day, and of public worship. It is supposed by such as have the best means of information, that throughout the kingdom, the number who regularly assemble for worship is far inferior to those who neglect it; that in our great towns and cities they are not one-fourth of the people, and in the metropolis a much smaller proportion. It is easy to foresee how the leisure afforded by the christian sabbath will be employed by those who utterly forget the design of its institution. It is somewhat remarkable that here the extremes meet, and that the public duties of religion are

most slighted by the highest and the lowest classes of society; by the former, I fear, from indolence and pride; by the latter from ignorance and profligacy.

Too many of the first description, when they do attend, it is in such a manner as makes it evident they esteem it merely an act of condescension, to which they submit as an example to their inferiors, who, penetrating their design, and imitating their indifference rather than their devotion, are disgusted with a religion which they perceive has no hold on their superiors, and is only imposed upon themselves as a badge of inferiority and a muzzle of restraint. Could the rich and noble be prevailed upon for a moment to attend to the instructions of their Lord, instead of making their elevated rank a reason for neglecting these duties, they would learn that there are none to whom they are so necessary; since there are none whose situation is so perilous, whose responsibility is so great, and whose salvation is so arduous.

Here fidelity compels me to advert to a circumstance, which I mention with sincere reluctance, because it implies something like a censure on the conduct of those whom it is our duty to respect. You are, probably, aware I mean the assigning part of the Sunday to *military exercises*. When we consider how important an institution the christian sabbath is, how essential to the maintenance of public worship, which is itself essential to religion, and what a barrier it opposes to the impiety and immorality of the age; is it not to be lamented that it should ever have been, in the smallest degree, infringed by legislative authority? The rest of the sabbath had been already too much violated, its duties too much neglected; but this is the first instance of the violation of it being publicly recommended and enjoined,* at a time too when we are engaged with an enemy whose very name conveys a warning against impiety. Our places of worship have been thinned by the absence of those who have been employed in military evolutions, and of a still greater number of gazers, whom such spectacles attract. Nor is the time lost from religious duties so much to be considered, as that tumult and hurry of mind, utterly incompatible with devotion, which are inseparable from military ideas and preparations. Surely it could never have been the intention of the legislature, though such has been the effect, to detach the defenders of their country from the worshippers of God: nor is it to be supposed they adverted to the influence which a precedent of such high authority must have in divesting the sabbath of its sanctity in the eyes of the people, and of establishing the fatal epoch whence it was no longer to be revered as the ordinance of heaven. They had, we believe, no such intention; but the innocence of the intention abates nothing of the mischief of the precedent.

* The Book of Sports, in the reign of James the First, is not an exception, as that, though sufficiently censurable, was not considered as a violation of the sabbath, considered as a day of *rest*.

As it is foreign from my purpose to make a complete enumeration of national sins, which would not only be a most painful task in itself, but quite incompatible with the limits of this discourse, I shall content myself with the mention of one more proof of the degeneracy of our manners. This proof is found in that almost universal profaneness which taints our daily intercourse, and which has risen to such a height as to have become a melancholy characteristic of our country. In no nation under heaven, probably, has the profanation of sacred terms been so prevalent as in this christian land. The name even of the Supreme Being himself, and the words he has employed to denounce the punishments of the impenitent, are rarely mentioned but in anger or in sport; so that were a stranger to our history to witness the style of our conversation, he would naturally infer we considered religion as a detected imposture; and that nothing more remained than, in return for the fears it had inspired, to treat it with the insult and derision due to a fallen tyrant. It is difficult to account for a practice, which gratifies no passion, and promotes no interest, unless we ascribe it to a certain vanity of appearing superior to religious fear, which tempts men to make bold with their Maker. If there are hypocrites in religion, there are also, strange

as it may appear, hypocrites in impiety, men who make an ostentation of more irreligion than they possess. An ostentation of this nature, the most irrational in the records of human folly, seems to lie at the root of profane swearing. It may not be improper to remind such as indulge this practice, that they need not insult their Maker to show that they do not fear him; that they may relinquish this vice without danger of being supposed to be devout, and that they may safely leave it to other parts of their conduct to efface the smallest suspicion of their piety.* To view this practice in the most favourable light, it indicates, as has been observed by a great living writer,† "a mind over which religious considerations have little influence." It also sufficiently accounts for that propensity to ridicule piety, which is one of our national peculiarities. It would be uncandid to suppose, that at the best times there was more piety on the continent than here: be this as it may, it never appears to have exposed its possessors to contempt; nor was the sublime devotion of Fenelon and of Pascal ever considered as forming a shade to their genius. The reverence for religion had not been worn away by the familiar abuse of its peculiar terms.

It will be expected something should be said on the *slave-trade*. Its enormity no words can express. But here we must feel a mixture of satisfaction and regret; of satisfaction, at finding it has excited such general indignation among the people; of regret, that notwithstanding this, it should still be continued. By the most earnest and unanimous remonstrances, addressed to those who alone could abolish it, the people have purged themselves from this contamination. Their application was unsuccessful. The guilt and turpitude of this traffic now rest upon the heads of those who sanction, and of those who conduct it. From some recent events in the western colonies, it seems not unlikely the Deity is about to take this affair into his own hands, and to accomplish by his interposition what has been denied to the prayer of the nation.

* See Vol. V. Notes of Sermons, No. XXXIV.—Ed.
† Dr. Paley.

It is far from being a pleasing employ; it is painful, it is distressing, to dwell on such topics; but it is necessary. Our disease has gone too far to admit of palliatives; our wounds are too deep to be healed, till they are searched and probed to the bottom. The only safe expedient which remains to be adopted, is an immediate return to God; *to forsake every one his evil way, and the violence that is in his hands, and cry mightily to him: and who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away his fierce anger from us?* At the same time, let it be remembered, that repentance is a personal concern. Instead of losing ourselves in a crowd, and resting in general confessions, we ought each one to examine his own ways, and turn from his own iniquity. We shall not fail, if we have the least piety, to lament the prevalence of sin around us, but we can repent only *of our own:* and however, in the present mixed and imperfect state, we may share in the judgements and calamities which other men's sins draw down, it is those we commit ourselves which alone can do us ultimate injury. Our continuance here is but for a short time; after which, as many as are *purified and made white* will remove into another world, be placed under a higher economy, and be put in possession of *a kingdom that cannot be moved.*

Let me remind you that repentance is a duty of greater extent than many are apt to suppose, who, confining their view, on such occasions as these, to a few of the grosser disorders of their lives, pay little attention to the heart: they are satisfied with feeling a momentary compunction, and attempting a partial reformation, instead of crying with the royal penitent, *create in me a clean heart!* They determine to break off particular vices,—an excellent resolution as far as it goes,—without proposing to themselves a life of habitual devotion, without imploring, under a sense of weakness, that grace which can alone renew the heart, making, in the words of our Lord, the tree good, that the fruit may be good also. Let it cost us what uneasiness it may, let us resolve, at the present season, to examine our ways, to become acquainted with the state of our consciences, to

enter with "the candle of the Lord" into the inmost recesses of the heart, and the *chambers of imagery*, whatever disorder or defilement they may conceal, or whatever alarm the knowledge of ourselves may excite; since to be apprised of danger is the first step to safety, and it will be infinitely better for us to judge and accuse ourselves now, than to be judged and condemned hereafter. Happy those to whom a seasonable alarm shall suggest the means of a perpetual security. We need be under no apprehension, lest the cherishing of the sentiments we have recommended should lead to despondency. We have a High-Priest, *who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.* In the midst of the deepest humiliation, we are invited to look up to him, with a humble reliance on the efficacy of his blood which cleanses from all sin; and to intrust our prayers and our duties, disordered and imperfect at best, into his hands, that he may mingle them with the incense of his intercession, and present them with acceptance before God.

When Nineveh was threatened with destruction by the prophet Jonah, tidings were brought to the king, who proclaimed a fast. Penetrated with the profoundest awe of the divine displeasure, he enjoined a rigorous abstinence from food, which extended even to the brute creation, who were also commanded to be covered with sackcloth. For in the eyes of that penitent prince it seemed proper that every thing should wear an air of mourning and desolation, while it lay under the frown of its Maker. He himself *rose from his throne, laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* He rightly judged that the glitter of state, the distinctions of rank, and the splendour of royalty should disappear at a moment when all classes were alike awaiting their doom; at a moment when the greatest as well as the least were made to feel they were potsherds of the earth, ready to be crumbled into dust. Such exemplary humiliation averted the divine anger, and Nineveh was spared. If our gracious Sovereign has (as we humbly believe) descended this day from his elevation, and laying aside

his robes, humbled himself in the dust before the Majesty of heaven; if his nobles have followed his example, and the people have resolved to *turn every one from his evil way*, the duties of the season will afford a surer defence than all our military preparations: our salvation will issue from the Being *whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

As a people, the most certain means of ensuring lasting prosperity, and of enabling us to transmit, unimpaired, to those who shall succeed us, the rich inheritance devolved from our fathers, will be a speedy return to the spirit and practice of the gospel. We shall ill consult the true interests of revelation by disguising its peculiarities, in hope of conciliating the approbation of infidels, and of adapting it more to their taste—a mistaken and dangerous policy, by which we run imminent risk of catching *their* contagion, without imparting the benefit of *its* truths. Let us not for a moment blench from its mysteries: they are *mysteries of godliness;* and, however much they may surpass human reason, bear the distinct impress of a divine hand. We rejoice that they *are mysteries*, so far from being ashamed of them on that account; since the principal reason why they are, and must ever continue such, is derived from their elevation, from their *unsearchable riches*, and undefinable grandeur. In fine, let us draw our religion and morality entirely from the word of God, without seeking any deeper foundation for our duties than the *will* of the Supreme Being, an implicit and perfect acquiescence in which is the *highest virtue* a creature can attain.

Amidst many unfavourable symptoms of the state of morals amongst us, there are others of a contrary nature. We may hope, infidelity has nearly run its length. In truth, its sophistry, in the eyes of men of sense, has been much discredited by the absurdity of its tenets; and if any have been in danger of being seduced by the talents of its advocates, they have commonly found a sufficient antidote in their lives. We have learned to prize revelation more than ever, since we have seen the ludicrous mistakes, as well as serious disasters, of those mystics of

impiety who chose rather to walk by an internal light than enjoy the benefit of its illumination. They have edified us much, without intending it: they have had the effect which the great critic of antiquity assigns as the purpose of the Tragic Muse, that of purifying the heart by pity and terror. Their zeal has excited an equal degree of ardour in a better cause, and their efforts to extirpate religion have been opposed by contrary efforts, to diffuse its influence, at home and abroad, to a degree unexampled in modern times. A growing unanimity has prevailed among the good in different parties, who, finding a centre of union in the great truths of revelation, and in a solicitude for its interests, are willing to merge their smaller differences in a common cause. The number of the sincerely pious, we trust, is increasing among us, whose zeal, so far from suffering abatement from the confidence of infidelity, has glowed with a purer and more steady flame than ever. These are pleasing indications that the presence of the *Holy One of Israel* is still in the midst of us.

How it may please the Ruler of the universe to dispose the destinies of the two most powerful nations of the earth, which are, at this moment, laid in the balance together, it is impossible for us with certainty to predict. But when we consider how many of his sincere worshippers, how large a portion of his church, together with how rich a fund of wisdom, of talents, and of all those elements of social order and happiness which he must approve, are enclosed within the limits of this highly-favoured land, we cannot believe he intends to give it up a prey to his enemies. Our insular situation is favourable, our resources prodigious, and the preparations which have long been making, apparently every way equal to the danger of the crisis: but still we would place our ultimate reliance on Him who abases the proud, and exalts the lowly. It would be presumption to imagine it in my power to add any thing to those considerations which have already produced such a general movement in defence of our liberties. The cause speaks for itself: it excites feelings which words are ill able to

express; involving every object and motive which can engage the solicitude, affect the interests, or inflame the heart, of man. After a series of provocations and injuries, reciprocally sustained and retaliated, the dispute betwixt us and our enemies is brought to a short issue; it is no longer which of the two nations shall have the ascendant, but which shall continue a nation: it is a struggle for existence, not for empire. It must surely be regarded as a happy circumstance that the contest did not take this shape at an earlier period, while many were deceived by certain specious pretences of liberty into a favourable opinion of our enemies' designs. The popular delusion is passed; the most unexampled prodigies of guilt have dispelled it; and, after a series of rapine and cruelty, have torn from every heart the last fibres of mistaken partiality. The crimes of those with whom we have to contend are legible in every part of Europe. There is scarcely a man to be found who is not most perfectly acquainted with the meaning of that freedom they profess to bestow; that it is a freedom from the dominion of laws to pass under the yoke of slavery, and from the fear of God to plunge into crimes and impiety; an impious barter of all that is good for all that is ill, through the utmost range and limits of moral destiny. Nor is it less easy to develope the character of our principal enemy. A man bred in the school of ferocity, amidst the din of arms, and the tumult of camps; his element war and confusion; who has changed his religion with his uniform, and has not spared the assassination of his own troops; it is easy to foresee what treatment such a man will give to his enemies should they fall into his power; to those enemies, especially, who, saved from the shipwreck of nations, are preserving as in an ark the precious remains of civilization and order; and whom, after destroying the liberties of every other country, he envies the melancholy distinction of being the only people he has not enslaved. Engaged with such an enemy, no weak hopes of moderation or clemency can tempt us for a moment to relax in our resistance to his power; and the only alternative which remains is, to conquer or to die.

Hence that unexampled unanimity which distinguishes the present season. In other wars we have been a divided people: the effect of our external operations has been in some measure weakened by intestine dissension. When peace has returned, the breach has widened, while parties have been formed on the merits of particular men, or of particular measures. These have all disappeared; we have buried our mutual animosities in a regard to the common safety. The sentiment of self-preservation, the first law which nature has impressed, has absorbed every other feeling; and the fire of liberty has melted down the discordant sentiments and minds of the British Empire into one mass, and propelled them in one direction. Partial interests and feelings are suspended, the spirits of the body are collected at the heart, and we are awaiting with anxiety, but without dismay, the discharge of that mighty tempest which hangs upon the skirts of the horizon, and to which the eyes of Europe and of the world are turned in silent and awful expectation. While we feel solicitude, let us not betray dejection, nor be alarmed at the past successes of our enemy, which are more dangerous to himself than to us, since they have raised him from obscurity to an elevation which has made him giddy, and tempted him to suppose every thing within his power. The intoxication of his success is the omen of his fall. What, though he has carried the flames of war throughout Europe, and *gathered as a nest the riches of the nations, while none peeped, nor muttered, nor moved the wing;* he has yet to try his fortune in another field; he has yet to contend on a soil filled with the monuments of freedom, enriched with the blood of its defenders; with a people who, animated with one soul, and inflamed with zeal for their laws and for their prince, are armed in defence of all that is dear or venerable; their wives, their parents, their children, the sanctuary of God, and the sepulchre of their fathers. We will not suppose there is one who will be deterred from exerting himself in such a cause, by a pusillanimous regard to his safety, when he reflects that he has already lived too long who has survived the ruin of his country;

and that he who can enjoy life after such an event, deserves not to have lived at all. It will suffice us, if our mortal existence, which is at most but a span, be co-extended with that of the nation which gave us birth. We will gladly quit the scene, with all that is noble and august, innocent and holy; and instead of wishing to survive the oppression of weakness, the violation of beauty, and the extinction of every thing on which the heart can repose, welcome the shades which will hide from our view such horrors.

From the most fixed principles of human nature, as well as from the examples of all history, we may be certain the conquest of this country, should it be permitted to take place, will not terminate in any ordinary catastrophe, in any much less calamitous than utter extermination. Our present elevation will be the exact measure of our future depression, as it will measure the fears and jealousies of those who subdue us. While the smallest vestige remains of our former greatness, while any trace or memorial exists of our having been once a flourishing and independent empire, while the nation breathes, they will be afraid of its recovering its strength, and never think themselves secure of their conquest till our navy is consumed, our wealth dissipated, our commerce extinguished, every liberal institution abolished, our nobles extirpated; whatever in rank, character, and talents gives distinction in society, called out and destroyed, and the refuse which remains swept together into a putrifying heap by the besom of destruction. The enemy will not need to proclaim his triumph; it will be felt in the more expressive silence of extended desolation.

Recollect for a moment his invasion of Egypt, a country which had never given him the slightest provocation; a country so remote from the scene of his crimes, that it probably did not know there was such a man in existence (happy ignorance, could it have lasted!); but while he was looking around him, like a vulture perched on an eminence, for objects on which he might gratify his insatiable thirst of rapine, he no sooner beheld the defenceless condition of that unhappy country, than he

alighted upon it in a moment. In vain did it struggle, flap its wings, and rend the air with its shrieks: the cruel enemy, deaf to its cries, had infixed his talons, and was busy in sucking its blood, when the interference of a superior power forced him to relinquish his prey, and betake himself to flight. Will that vulture, think you, ever forget his disappointment on that occasion, or the numerous wounds, blows, and concussions he received in a ten years' struggle? It is impossible. It were folly to expect it. He meditates, no doubt, the deepest revenge. He who saw nothing in the simple manners and blood-bought liberties of the Swiss to engage his forbearance, nothing in proclaiming himself a Mahometan to revolt his conscience, nothing in the condition of defenceless prisoners to excite his pity, nor in that of the companions of his warfare, sick and wounded in a foreign land, to prevent him from despatching them by poison, will treat in a manner worthy of the impiety and inhumanity of his character, a nation which he naturally dislikes as being free, dreads as the rivals of his power, and abhors as the authors of his disgrace.

Though these are undoubted truths, and ought to be seriously considered, yet I would rather choose to appeal to sentiments more elevated than such topics can inspire. To form an adequate idea of the duties of this crisis, it will be necessary to raise your minds to a level with your station, to extend your views to a distant futurity, and to consequences the most certain, though most remote. By a series of criminal enterprises, by the successes of guilty ambition, the liberties of Europe have been gradually extinguished: the subjugation of Holland, Switzerland, and the free towns of Germany has completed that catastrophe; and we are the only people in the eastern hemisphere who are in possession of equal laws and a free constitution. Freedom, driven from every spot on the continent, has sought an asylum in a country which she always chose for her favourite abode; but she is pursued even here, and threatened with destruction. The inundation of lawless power, after covering the whole earth, threatens to follow us

here; and we are most exactly, most critically placed, in the only aperture where it can be successfully repelled, in the Thermopylæ of the universe. As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you, my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the fœderal representatives of the human race; for with you it is to determine (under God) in what condition the latest posterity shall be born; their fortunes are intrusted to your care, and on your conduct at this moment depends the colour and complexion of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it? It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in every thing great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapt in eternal gloom. It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare, every apprehension of danger must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battles of the civilized world. Go then, ye defenders of your country,* accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprise her selectest influence. While you are engaged in the field

* A company of volunteers attended public worship on this occasion.—Ed.

many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon will grasp the sword of the Spirit; and from myriads of humble, contrite hearts, the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping, will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms.

While you have every thing to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success, so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, is equal to the justice of your cause. But should Providence determine otherwise, should you fall in this struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity, to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events of this period (and they will incessantly revolve them), will turn to you a reverential eye, while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre. I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots, of every age and country, are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favourable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose. Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! Your mantle fell when you ascended; and thousands inflamed with your spirit, and impatient to tread in your steps, are ready *to swear by Him that sitteth upon the throne, and liveth for ever and ever*, they will protect freedom in her last asylum, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labours, and cemented with your blood. And thou, sole Ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, *gird on thy sword, thou Most Mighty:* go forth with our hosts in the day of battle! Impart, in addition to their hereditary valour, that confidence of success which springs from thy presence! Pour into their hearts the spirit of departed heroes! Inspire them with thine own; and,

while led by thine hand, and fighting under thy banners, open thou their eyes to behold in every valley, and in every plain, what the prophet beheld by the same illumination—chariots of fire, and horses of fire! *Then shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark: and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*

THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER CLASSES:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

HERVEY LANE, LEICESTER,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

[PUBLISHED IN 1810.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

To attempt to disarm the severity of criticism by humiliation or entreaty, would be a hopeless task. Waving every apology, the author, therefore, has only to remark, that the motives of a writer must ever remain a secret, but the *tendency* of what he writes is capable of being ascertained, and is in reality the only consideration in which the public are interested. The author is concerned at an unexpected coincidence in the text betwixt this and a very excellent discourse, delivered on a similar occasion, and published by his much esteemed friend, the Rev. Francis Cox. The coincidence was entirely accidental, and the text in each instance being employed very much in the manner of a motto, it is hoped the train of thought will be found sufficiently distinct. He cannot conclude without recommending to the public, and to the young especially, the serious perusal of the above-mentioned animated and impressive discourse.

A SERMON.

PROVERBS xix. 2.

That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.

THROUGHOUT every part of this book the author is copious, and even profuse, in the praises of knowledge. To stimulate to the acquisition of it, and to assist in the pursuit, is the professed design with which it was penned. *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give subtlety to the simple, to the young men knowledge and discretion.*

Though it is evident from many passages, that in the encomiums to which we have referred, the author had principally in view divine knowledge, yet from other parts it is equally certain he by no means intended to exclude from these commendations knowledge in general; and as we propose this afternoon to recommend to your attention the Sabbath-day School established in this place, a few reflections on the utility of knowledge at large, and of religious knowledge in particular, will not be deemed unseasonable.

I. Let me request your attention to a few remarks on the utility of knowledge in general. It must strike us, in the first place, that the extent to which we have the faculty of acquiring it, forms the most obvious distinction of our species. In inferior animals it subsists in so small a degree, that we are wont to deny it to them altogether; the range of their knowledge, if it deserve the name, is so extremely limited, and their ideas so few

and simple. Whatever is most exquisite in their operations is referred to an instinct, which, working within a narrow compass, though with undeviating uniformity, supplies the place, and supersedes the necessity, of reason. In inferior animals, the knowledge of the whole species is possessed by each individual of the species, while man is distinguished by numberless diversities in the scale of mental improvement. Now, to be destitute, in a remarkable degree, of an acquisition which forms the appropriate possession of human nature, is degrading to that nature, and must proportionably disqualify it for reaching the end of its creation.

As the power of acquiring knowledge is to be ascribed to reason, so the attainment of it mightily strengthens and improves it, and thereby enables it to enrich itself with further acquisitions. Knowledge, in general, expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment. By means of it we become less dependent for satisfaction upon the sensitive appetites, the gross pleasures of sense are more easily despised, and we are made to feel the superiority of the spiritual to the material part of our nature. Instead of being continually solicited by the influence and irritation of sensible objects, the mind can retire within herself, and expatiate in the cool and quiet walks of contemplation. The Author of nature has wisely annexed a pleasure to the exercise of our active powers, and particularly to the pursuit of truth, which, if it be in some instances less intense, is far more durable than the gratifications of sense, and is, on that account, incomparably more valuable. Its duration, to say nothing of its other properties, renders it more valuable. It may be repeated without satiety, and pleases afresh on every reflection upon it. These are self-created satisfactions, always within our reach, not dependent upon events, not requiring a peculiar combination of circumstances to produce or maintain them; they rise from the mind itself, and inhere, so to speak, in its very substance, Let the mind but retain its proper functions, and they spring

up spontaneously, unsolicited, unborrowed, and unbought. Even the difficulties and impediments which obstruct the pursuit of truth, serve, according to the economy under which we are placed, to render it more interesting. The labour of intellectual search resembles and exceeds the tumultuous pleasures of the chase; and the consciousness of overcoming a formidable obstacle, or of lighting on some happy discovery, gives all the enjoyment of a conquest, without those corroding reflections by which the latter must be impaired. Can we doubt that Archimedes, who was so absorbed in his contemplations as not to be diverted by the sacking of his native city, and was killed in the very act of meditating a mathematical problem, did not, when he exclaimed Ευρηκα! ευρηκα! I have found it! I have found it! feel a transport as genuine as was ever experienced after the most brilliant victory?

But to return to the moral good which results from the acquisition of knowledge: it is chiefly this, that by multiplying the mental resources, it has a tendency to exalt the character, and, in some measure, to correct and subdue the taste for gross sensuality. It enables the possessor to beguile his leisure moments (and every man has such) in an innocent, at least, if not in a useful, manner. The poor man who can read, and who possesses a taste for reading, can find entertainment at home, without being tempted to repair to the public house for that purpose. His mind can find him employment when his body is at rest; he does not lie prostrate and afloat on the current of incidents, liable to be carried whithersoever the impulse of appetite may direct. There is in the mind of such a man an intellectual spring urging him to the pursuit of *mental* good; and if the minds of his family also are a little cultivated, conversation becomes the more interesting, and the sphere of domestic enjoyment enlarged. The calm satisfaction which books afford, puts him into a disposition to relish more exquisitely the tranquil delight inseparable from the indulgence of conjugal and parental affection; and as he will be more respectable in the eyes of his family

than he who can teach them nothing, he will be naturally induced to cultivate whatever may preserve, and to shun whatever would impair, that respect. He who is inured to reflection will carry his views beyond the present hour; he will extend his prospect a little into futurity, and be disposed to make some provision for his approaching wants; whence will result an increased motive to industry, together with a care to husband his earnings, and to avoid unnecessary expense. The poor man who has gained a taste for good books will in all likelihood become thoughtful; and when you have given the poor a habit of thinking, you have conferred on them a much greater favour than by the gift of a large sum of money, since you have put them in possession of the *principle* of all legitimate prosperity.

I am persuaded that the extreme profligacy, improvidence, and misery, which are so prevalent among the labouring classes in many countries, are chiefly to be ascribed to the want of education. In proof of this we need only cast our eyes on the condition of the Irish, compared with that of the peasantry in Scotland. Among the former you behold nothing but beggary, wretchedness, and sloth: in Scotland, on the contrary, under the disadvantages of a worse climate and more unproductive soil, a degree of decency and comfort, the fruit of sobriety and industry, are conspicuous among the lower classes. And to what is this disparity in their situation to be ascribed, except to the influence of education? In Ireland, the education of the poor is miserably neglected; very few of them can read, and they grow up in a total ignorance of what it most befits a rational creature to understand: while in Scotland the establishment of free schools * in every parish, an essential branch of the

* In the "Edinburgh Christian Instructor" for 1816, the slight mistake which occurs above, in reference to "free schools" in North Britain, is thus corrected. "The truth is, that *free* schools could never have effected that improvement in the manners and intelligence of the lower orders in Scotland, for which they are so remarkable; and we have reason to bless the judicious liberality of our ancestors, who contented themselves with bringing education within the reach of the lower orders, by allowing limited salaries to the schoolmasters, *in aid of the school wages*, instead of going to the hurtful extreme which tends to render teachers careless and parents indifferent."—ED.

ecclesiastical constitution of the country, brings the means of instruction within the reach of the poorest, who are there inured to decency, industry, and order.

Some have objected to the instruction of the lower classes, from an apprehension that it would lift them above their sphere, make them dissatisfied with their station in life, and, by impairing the habits of subordination, endanger the tranquillity of the state; an objection devoid surely of all force and validity. It is not easy to conceive in what manner instructing men in their duties can prompt them to neglect those duties, or how that enlargement of reason which enables them to comprehend the true grounds of authority and the obligation to obedience, should indispose them to obey. The admirable mechanism of society, together with that subordination of ranks which is essential to its subsistence, is surely not an elaborate imposture, which the exercise of reason will detect and expose. The objection we have stated, implies a reflection on the social order, equally impolitic, invidious, and unjust. Nothing in reality renders legitimate governments so insecure as extreme ignorance in the people. It is this which yields them an easy prey to seduction, makes them the victims of prejudices and false alarms, and so ferocious withal, that their interference in a time of public commotion, is more to be dreaded than the eruption of a volcano.

The true prop of good government is the opinion, the perception, on the part of the subject of benefits resulting from it; a settled conviction, in other words, of its being a public good. Now nothing can produce or maintain that opinion but knowledge, since opinion is a form of knowledge. Of tyrannical and unlawful governments, indeed, the support is fear, to which ignorance is as congenial as it is abhorrent from the genius of a free people. Look at the popular insurrections and massacres in France: of what description of persons were those ruffians composed, who, breaking forth like a torrent, overwhelmed the mounds of lawful authority? Who were the cannibals that sported with the mangled carcases and palpitating limbs of their murdered victims, and dragged them about with their teeth in the gardens of

the Tuilleries? Were they refined and elaborated into these barbarities by the efforts of a too polished education? No: they were the very scum of the people, destitute of all moral culture, whose atrocity was only equalled by their ignorance, as might well be expected, when the one was the legitimate parent of the other. Who are the persons who, in every country, are most disposed to outrage and violence, but the most ignorant and uneducated of the poor? to which class also chiefly belong those unhappy beings who are doomed to expiate their crimes at the fatal tree; few of whom, it has recently been ascertained, on accurate inquiry, are able to read, and the greater part utterly destitute of all moral or religious principle.

Ignorance gives a sort of eternity to prejudice, and perpetuity to error. When a baleful superstition, like that of the church of Rome, has once got footing among a people in this situation, it becomes next to impossible to eradicate it; for it can only be assailed, with success, by the weapons of reason and argument, and to these weapons it is impassive. The sword of ethereal temper loses its edge, when tried on the scaly hide of this leviathan. No wonder the church of Rome is such a friend to ignorance; it is but paying the arrears of gratitude in which she is deeply indebted. How is it possible for her not to hate that light which would unveil her impostures, and detect her enormities?

If we survey the genius of Christianity, we shall find it to be just the reverse. It was ushered into the world with the injunction, *Go and teach all nations*, and every step of its progress is to be ascribed to instruction. With a condescension worthy of its Author, it offers information to the meanest and most illiterate; but extreme ignorance is not a state of mind favourable to it. The first churches were planted in cities (and those the most celebrated and enlightened), drawn neither from the very highest nor the very lowest classes; the former, too often the victims of luxury and pride, the latter, sunk in extreme stupidity; but from the middle orders, where the largest portion of virtue and good sense has usually resided. In remote villages, its progress was extremely slow, owing, unquestionably, to that want of mental cultivation, which rendered them the last retreats of superstition; insomuch that in the fifth century, the abettors of the ancient idolatry began to be denominated *Pagani*, which properly denotes the inhabitants of the country in distinction from those who reside in towns. At the Reformation, the progress of the reformed faith went hand in hand with the advancement of letters; it had every where the same friends and the same enemies, and, next to its agreement with the Holy Scriptures, its success is chiefly to be ascribed, under God, to the art of printing, the revival of classical learning, and the illustrious patrons of science attached to its cause. In the representation of that glorious period, usually styled the Millennium, when religion shall universally prevail, it is mentioned as a conspicuous feature, that *men shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.* That period will not be distinguished from the preceding, by men's minds being more torpid and inactive, but rather by the consecration of every power to the service of the Most High. It will be a period of remarkable illumination, during which *the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as that of seven days.* Every useful talent will be cultivated, every art subservient to the interests of man, be improved and perfected; learning will amass her stores, and genius emit her splendour; but the former will be displayed without ostentation, and the latter shine with the softened effulgence of humility and love.

II. We have hitherto spoken of the advantages of *knowledge in general;* we proceed to notice the utility of *religious knowledge* in particular. Religion, on account of its intimate relation to a future state, is every man's proper business, and should be his chief care. Of knowledge in general, there are branches which it would be preposterous in the bulk of mankind to attempt to acquire, because they have no immediate connexion with their duties, and demand talents which nature has denied, or

opportunities which Providence has withheld. But with respect to the primary truths of religion, the case is different; they are of such daily use and necessity, that they form not the materials of mental luxury, so properly, as the food of the mind. In improving the character, the influence of general knowledge is often feeble and always indirect; of religious knowledge the tendency to purify the heart is immediate, and forms its professed scope and design. *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* To ascertain the character of the Supreme Author of all things, to know, as far as we are capable of comprehending such a subject, what is his moral disposition, what the situation we stand in towards him, and the principles by which he conducts his administration, will be allowed, by every considerate person, to be of the highest consequence. Compared to this, all other speculations and inquiries sink into insignificance; because every event that can befall us, is in his hands, and by his sentence our final condition must be fixed. To regard such an inquiry with indifference, is the mark, not of a noble, but of an abject mind, which, immersed in sensuality, or amused with trifles, *deems itself unworthy of eternal life.* To be so absorbed in worldly pursuits, as to neglect future prospects, is a conduct that can plead no excuse, until it is ascertained beyond all doubt or contradiction, that there is no hereafter, and that nothing remains but that we *eat and drink for to-morrow we die.* Even in that case, to forego the hope of immortality without a sigh; to be gay and sportive on the brink of destruction, in the very moment of relinquishing prospects, on which the wisest and best in every age have delighted to dwell, is the indication of a base and degenerate spirit. If existence be a good, the eternal loss of it must be a great evil: if it be an evil, reason suggests the propriety of inquiring why it is so, of investigating the maladies by which it is oppressed. Amidst the darkness and uncertainty which hang over our future condition, Revelation, by bringing life and immortality to light, affords the only relief. In the Bible alone, we learn the real character of

the Supreme Being; his holiness, justice, mercy, and truth; the moral condition of man, considered in his relation to Him, is clearly pointed out; the doom of impenitent transgressors denounced; and the method of obtaining mercy, through the interposition of a divine mediator, plainly revealed. There are two considerations which may suffice to evince the indispensable necessity of scriptural knowledge.

1. The scriptures contain an authentic discovery *of the way of salvation.* They are a revelation of mercy to a lost world; a reply to that most interesting inquiry, *What we must do to be saved.* The distinguishing feature of the gospel system, is the economy of redemption, or the gracious provision the Supreme Being has thought fit to make for reconciling the world to himself, by the manifestation in human nature of his own Son. It is this which constitutes it the *Gospel*, by way of eminence, or the glad tidings concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ, on the right reception of which, or its rejection, turns our everlasting weal or woe. It is not from the character of God, as our creator, it should be remembered, that the hope of the guilty can arise; the fullest developement of his essential perfections could afford no relief in this case, and therefore natural religion, were it capable of being carried to the utmost perfection, can never supersede the necessity of revealed. To inspire confidence, an express communication from heaven is necessary: since the introduction of sin has produced a peculiarity in our situation, and a perplexity in our prospects, which nothing but an express assurance of mercy can remove.

In what manner the blessed and only Potentate may think fit to dispose of a race of apostates, is a question on which reason can suggest nothing satisfactory, nothing salutary: a question, in the solution of which, their being no data to proceed upon, wisdom and folly fail alike, and every order of intellect is reduced to a level; for *who hath known the mind of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him?* It is a secret which, had he not been pleased to unfold it, must have for ever remained in the breast of the Deity. This secret, in infinite mercy, he

has condescended to disclose: the silence, not that which John witnessed in the Apocalypse, of half an hour, but that of ages, is broken; the darkness is past, and we behold, in the gospel, the astonishing spectacle of *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses*, and sending forth his ambassadors to *entreat us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.* To that strange insensibility with respect to the concerns of a future world, which is at once the indication and consequence of the fall, must we ascribe the languid attention with which this communication is received; instead of producing, as it ought, transports of gratitude and joy in every breast.

This, however we may be disposed to regard it, is unquestionably the grand peculiarity of the gospel, the exclusive boast and treasure of the Scriptures, and most emphatically *the way of salvation*, not only as it reveals the gracious intentions of God to a sinful world, but as it lays a solid foundation for the *supernatural* duties of faith and repentance. All the discoveries of the gospel bear a most intimate relation to the character and offices of the Saviour; from him they emanate, in him they centre; nor is any thing we learn from the Old and New Testament of saving tendency, further than as a part of the truth as it is *in Jesus.* The neglect of considering revelation in this light, is a fruitful source of infidelity. Viewing it in no higher character than a republication of the law of nature, men are first led to doubt the importance, and next the truth, of the discoveries it contains; an easy and natural transition, since the question of their importance is so complicated with that of their truth, in the Scriptures themselves, that the most refined ingenuity cannot long keep them separate. *It gives the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* While we contemplate it under this its true character, we view it in its just dimensions, and feel no inclination to extenuate the force of those representations

which are expressive of its pre-eminent dignity. There is nothing will be allowed to come into comparison with it, nothing we shall not be ready to sacrifice for a participation of its blessings, and the extension of its influence. The veneration we shall feel for the Bible, as the depository of *saving knowledge*, will be totally distinct, not only from what we attach to any other book, but from that admiration its other properties inspire; and the variety and antiquity of its history, the light it affords in various researches, its inimitable touches of nature, together with the sublimity and beauty so copiously poured over its pages, will be deemed subsidiary ornaments, the embellishments of the casket, which contains the *pearl of great price.*

2. Scriptural knowledge is of inestimable value on account of its supplying an infallible *rule of life.* To the most untutored mind, the information it affords on this subject is far more full and precise than the highest efforts of reason could attain. In the best moral precepts issuing from human wisdom, there is an incurable defect in that want of authority which robs them of their power over the conscience; they are obligatory no farther than their reason is perceived; a deduction of proofs is necessary, more or less intricate and uncertain, and even when clearest, it is still but the language of man to man, respectable as sage advice, but wanting the force and authority of law. In a well-attested revelation, it is the Judge speaking from the tribunal, the Supreme Legislator promulgating and interpreting his own laws. With what force and conviction do those Apostles and Prophets address us, whose miraculous powers attest them to be the servants of the Most High, the immediate organs of the Deity! As the morality of the gospel is more pure and comprehensive than was ever inculcated before, so the consideration of its divine origination invests it with an energy of which every system not expressly founded upon it is entirely devoid. We turn at our peril from Him who speaketh to us from heaven.

Of an accountable creature, duty is the concern of every moment, since he is every moment pleasing or dis-

pleasing God. It is a universal element, mingling with every action, and qualifying every disposition and pursuit. The moral quality of conduct, as it serves both to ascertain and to form the character, has consequences in a future world so certain and infallible, that it is represented in scripture as a seed, no part of which is lost, "for *whatsoever* a man soweth, that also shall he reap." That rectitude which the inspired writers usually denominate *holiness*, is the health and beauty of the soul, capable of bestowing dignity in the absence of every other accomplishment, while the want of it leaves the possessor of the richest intellectual endowments, a painted sepulchre. Hence results the indispensable necessity, to every description of persons, of sound religious instruction, and of an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, as its genuine source.

It must be confessed, from melancholy experience, that a speculative acquaintance with the rules of duty, is too compatible with the violation of its dictates, and that it is possible for the convictions of conscience to be habitually overpowered by the corrupt suggestions of appetite. To see distinctly the right way, and to pursue it, are not precisely the same thing. Still nothing in the order of means promises so much success as the diligent inculcation of revealed truth. He who is acquainted with the *terrors of the Lord*, cannot live in the neglect of God and religion with present, any more than with future, impunity; the path of disobedience is obstructed, if not rendered impassable; and wherever he turns his eyes he beholds the sword of divine justice stretched out to intercept his passage. Guilt will be appalled, conscience alarmed, and the fruits of unlawful gratification embittered to his taste.

It is surely desirable to place as many obstacles as possible in the path of ruin: to take care that the image of death shall meet the offender at every turn; that he shall not be able to persist without treading upon briars and scorpions, without forcing his way through obstructions more formidable than he can expect to meet with in a contrary course. If you can enlist the nobler part

of his nature under the banners of virtue, set him at war with himself, and subject him to the necessity, should he persevere, of stifling and overcoming whatever is most characteristic of a reasonable creature, you have done what will probably not be unproductive of advantage. If he be at the same time reminded, by his acquaintance with the word of God, of a better state of mind being attainable, a better destiny reserved (provided they are willing and obedient) for the children of men, there is room to hope that, *wearied*, to speak in the language of the prophet, *in the greatness of his way*, he will bethink himself of the true refuge, and implore the Spirit of grace to aid his weakness, and subdue his corruptions. Sound religious instruction is a perpetual counterpoise to the force of depravity. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.*

While we insist on the absolute necessity of an acquaintance with the word of God, we are equally convinced it is but an instrument, which, like every other, requires a hand to wield it; and that, important as it is in the order of means, the Spirit of Christ only can make it effectual, which ought therefore to be earnestly and incessantly implored for that purpose. *Open mine eyes*, saith the Psalmist, *and I shall behold wonderful things out of thy law.* We trust it will be your care, who have the conduct of the school we are recommending to the patronage of this audience, to impress on these children a deep conviction of their radical corruption, and of the necessity of the agency of the Spirit, to render the knowledge they acquire practical and experimental. *In the morning sow your seed, in the evening withhold not your hand; but remember that neither he that soweth, nor he that watereth, is any thing; it is God that giveth the increase.* Be not satisfied with making them read a lesson, or repeat a prayer. By every thing tender and solemn

in religion, by a due admixture of the awful considerations drawn from the prospects of death and judgement, with others of a more pleasing nature, aim to fix serious impressions on their hearts. Aim to produce a religious concern, carefully watch its progress, and endeavour to conduct it to a prosperous issue. Lead them to the footstool of the Saviour; teach them to rely, as guilty creatures, on his merits alone, and to commit their eternal interests entirely into his hands. Let the salvation of these children be the object, to which every word of your instructions, every exertion of your authority, is directed. Despise the profane clamour which would deter you from attempting to render them serious, from an apprehension of its making them melancholy, not doubting for a moment, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that the path to true happiness lies through purity, humility, and devotion. Meditate the worth of souls: meditate deeply the lessons the Scriptures afford on their inconceivable value and eternal duration. While the philosopher wearies himself with endless speculations on their physical properties and nature, while the politician only contemplates the social arrangements of mankind and the shifting forms of policy, fix *your* attention on the individual importance of man, as the creature of God, and a candidate for immortality. Let it be your highest ambition to train up these children for an unchanging condition of being. Spare no pains to recover them to the image of God; render familiar to their minds, in all its extent, the various branches of that *holiness* without which *none shall see the Lord*. Inculcate the obligation, and endeavour to inspire the love of that rectitude, that eternal rectitude, which was with God before time began, was embodied in the person of his Son, and in its lower communications, will survive every sublunary change, emerge in the dissolution of all things, and be impressed, in refulgent characters, on the new heavens and the new earth, *in which dwelleth righteousness*. Pray often with them, and for them, and remind them of the inconceivable advantages attached to that exercise. Accustom them to a punctual and reverential attendance at the house of God: insist on the sanctification of the Sabbath, by such a disposal of time, as is suitable to a day of rest and devotion. Survey them with a vigilant and tender eye, checking every appearance of an evil and depraved disposition the moment it springs up, and encouraging the dawn of piety and virtue. By thus *training them up in the way they should go*, you may reasonably hope that *when old, they will not depart from it*.

We congratulate the nation, on the extent of the efforts employed, and the means set on foot, for the improvement of the lower classes, and especially the children of the poor, in moral and religious knowledge, from which we hope much good will accrue, not only to the parties concerned, but to the kingdom at large. These are the likeliest, or rather, the only expedients that can be adopted, for forming a sound and virtuous populace; and if there be any truth in the figure, by which society is compared to a pyramid, it is on them its stability chiefly depends: the elaborate ornament at the top will be a wretched compensation for the want of solidity in the lower parts of the structure. These are not the times in which it is safe for a nation to repose on the lap of ignorance. If there ever were a season, when public tranquillity was ensured by the absence of knowledge, that season is past. The convulsed state of the world will not permit unthinking stupidity to sleep, without being appalled by phantoms, and shaken by terrors, to which reason, which defines her objects, and limits her apprehension, by the reality of things is a stranger. Every thing in the condition of mankind announces the approach of some great crisis, for which nothing can prepare us but the diffusion of knowledge, probity, and the fear of the Lord. While the world is impelled, with such violence, in opposite directions; while a spirit of giddiness and revolt is shed upon the nations, and the seeds of mutation are so thickly sown, the improvement of the mass of the people will be our grand security; in the neglect of which, the politeness,

the refinement, and the knowledge accumulated in the higher orders, weak and unprotected, will be exposed to imminent danger, and perish like a garland in the grasp of popular fury. *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure.*

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS AND SUPPORTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER:

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED TO

THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON,

AT HIS ORDINATION OVER THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH, AT STRETTON, WARWICKSHIRE.

[PUBLISHED IN 1812.]

PREFACE.

THE following Discourse would sooner have made its appearance, but for circumstances in which the public are too little interested, to render it necessary or proper for me to explain: nor should I have adverted to the time of its publication, did it not seem strange that, having been preached on a public occasion, it should be committed to the press more than a twelvemonth after the delivery.

With respect to the Sermon itself, the author begs leave to bespeak the indulgence of his readers for introducing sentiments with which they must be perfectly familiar, requesting them to recollect that, on practical subjects, the most common thoughts are usually the most important, and that originality is the last quality we seek for in advice. If it have any tendency to do good beyond the occasion of its delivery, by reminding my highly-esteemed brethren in the ministry of the duties and obligation attached to their sacred function, the end proposed will be answered. The worthy person to whom it was addressed, gave a specimen of his liberality, in engaging me to take so leading a part in his ordination, when our difference of sentiment on the subject of Baptism was well known; a subject which has, unhappily, been a frequent occasion of alienating the minds of christians from each other. How much is it to be lamented, that the christian world should be so violently agitated by disputes, and divided into factions, on points, which, it is allowed, in whatever way they are decided, do not enter into the essentials of christianity! When will the time arrive, when the disciples of Christ shall cordially join hand and heart with all who *hold the head*,

and no other terms of communion be insisted upon in any church, but what are necessary to constitute a real christian? The departure from a principle so directly resulting from the genius of christianity, and so evidently inculcated and implied in the sacred Scriptures, has, in my apprehension, been productive of infinite mischief; nor is there room to anticipate the period of the universal diffusion and triumph of the christian religion, but in consequence of its being completely renounced and abandoned.

What can be more repugnant to the beautiful idea which our Saviour gives us of his church, as *one fold under one shepherd*, than the present aspect of Christendom, split into separate and hostile communions, frowning defiance on each other, where each erects itself upon *party principles*, and selects its respective watch-word of contention, as though the epithet of militant, when applied to the church, were designed to announce, not a state of conflict with the powers of darkness, but of irreconcilable intestine warfare and opposition. But it is necessary to quit a subject which, though painfully interesting, would necessarily lead to reflections inconsistent with the limits of this preface.

It may be more to the purpose to remark, that the substance of the following discourse was delivered in London, at the anniversary of an academical institution, recently established in the neighbourhood of that metropolis, for educating young men for the ministry in the Baptist denomination. The institution to which we refer, is under the immediate superintendence of the Rev. William Newman.* I cannot let the present occasion pass, of earnestly and respectfully recommending this infant seminary to the patronage of the religious public. There was a time, we are aware, when doubts were entertained, in some serious minds, of the eligibility of training young men for the ministry, by a preparatory course of study. These scruples, we believe, have long since subsided, and a conviction felt by intelligent men of all denominations, of the expedience, if not the necessity, of instructing candidates for the ministry in the principles of science and literature. Learning is no longer dreaded as the enemy of piety; nor is it supposed that the orthodoxy of a public teacher of religion derives any security from his professed ignorance on every other subject. Along with this revolution in the sentiments of a certain class of christians, circumstances have arisen, connected with the more general diffusion of knowledge and the state of society, which render a higher degree of mental cultivation than was heretofore needed, indispensably requisite. The Baptist denomination, in common with other christians, have not failed to advert to this urgent and increasing demand for cultivated talent in their ministers, although they have long had occasion to lament the scantiness and inadequacy of their means of supplying it. To the Bristol Academy, the only seminary they possessed till within these few years, they feel the highest obligations, for supplying them with a succession of able and faithful pastors, who have done honour to their churches: and few things would give the patrons and founders of the seminary, for which I am pleading, more concern, than the suspicion of entertaining views unfavourable to that academy. They respect its claim of seniority; they revere the character of its excellent President; they contemplate, with the highest satisfaction, the beneficial result of its operations, conspicuous in most parts of the kingdom:—but they are too well acquainted with the disinterested motives of its friends and benefactors, to suspect them of wishing to monopolize the education of ministers connected with the denomination. They feel as little jealousy of the seminary recently established in Yorkshire, which has already produced good fruits, under the culture and superintendence of the excellent Mr. Steadman. Convinced, however, of there being still occasion for the enlargement of the means of instruction, and having, by the munificence of a generous individual, been presented with a house and premises well adapted to academical purposes, they could feel no hesitation in accepting so noble a gift, or in seconding the pious and benevolent

* W. H. Murch, D. D, is now the tutor, 1838.

design of the founder. The institution is yet in its infancy, and subsists on a small scale. They look to the smiles of heaven, and to the liberality of a christian public, and, especially, to the piety and opulence of the professors of religion in the metropolis, who have never been wanting in the zealous support of institutions tending to promote the glory of God and the best interests of mankind, for such an enlargement of their funds and resources as, seconded by the efforts of its worthy tutor, shall render it a permanent and extensive blessing.

LEICESTER,
December 31, 1811.

A DISCOURSE.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 1.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

As you have requested me to address you upon the present occasion, I am persuaded you will deem no apology necessary for the use of that freedom which the nature of the service to which you have invited me demands, combined with those sentiments of high esteem which your character will always inspire. Having with the accustomed solemnities, been invested with the pastoral office over this church, you will permit me to remind you of the discouragements on the one hand, and the supports on the other, which you may reasonably look for in your ministerial warfare, as far as they are naturally suggested to us by the passage of scripture selected for the basis of our present discourse.

If it is necessary for the private christian, before he assumes a religious profession, to count the cost; to the minister it cannot be less so, that he may not be surprised by unexpected trials, nor dismayed at the encounter of difficulties for which he has made no preparation. A just estimate of the nature and magnitude is an important qualification for the proper discharge of whatever functions we are called to exert. As you are neither a novice in the ministry, nor have failed to reflect deeply on the consequences of your present engagements, you will not suspect me of attempting, by the hints which may be suggested, to give you information, but merely *to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance.*

I. Let me request your attention to the sources of *dis-*

couragement connected with the office you have undertaken.

1. They are such as arise, in part, from the nature of the office itself, which is appointed for the purpose of converting souls to God, and conducting them in the path to eternal life. To you, in common with other christian pastors, is committed the ministry of reconciliation, the office of promulgating that system of truth which is designed to renew the world and sanctify the church. Under the highest authority you are enjoined to use your utmost efforts *to open blind eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* The bare mention of such an employment is enough to convince us the difficulties attending it are of no ordinary magnitude, and to make us exclaim with an apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

The minds of men are naturally indisposed to the reception of divine truth. The truths of the gospel are not merely of a speculative nature, which need only to be stated with their proper evidence in order to ensure their success: there are in the mind latent prejudices against which they strongly militate, and which, when excited, naturally produce opposition. Mankind are disposed to think well of themselves, to view their virtues through a magnifying medium, and to cast their deficiencies and vices into the shade. Dissatisfied, as they often are, with their outward condition, they have yet little or no conviction of their spiritual wants; but with respect to these are ready to imagine, with the Laodiceans, that they *are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.* Hence, it is with extreme difficulty they are brought to acquiesce in the humiliating representations, made by the oracles of God, of their native guilt and misery. They will readily confess they are not perfectly innocent or faultless; they have their imperfections as well as others, but they are far from believing that they are actually under the wrath and displeasure of the Almighty. They feel, on the whole, satisfied with themselves, and, by setting their supposed good qualities and

actions against their bad ones, contrive to adjust their account in such a manner as leaves a considerable balance in their favour. On the mercy of God they feel no objection to profess their reliance; deeming it more decent, and even more safe, than to challenge his justice; but it is easy to perceive that the mercy of which they speak is of such a nature, that they would look upon it as an absurdity to suppose it could be withheld. In short, they are the whole who need no physician.

The gospel presupposes a charge of guilt; it assumes, as an indubitable fact, the universal apostasy of our race, and its consequent liability to perish under the stroke of the divine anger; nor can you acquit yourself of the imputation of handling the word of God deceitfully, if, from false delicacy or mistaken tenderness, you neglect the frequent inculcation of this momentous truth. You will find it, however, no easy matter to fasten the charge on the conscience; which, when it seems to be admitted, will often amount to nothing more than a vague and general acknowledgement, which leaves the heart quite unaffected. To convince effectually is, indeed, the work of a superior agent.

The very attempt to produce that humiliating sense of unworthiness and weakness, which is essential to a due reception of the gospel, will frequently excite disgust, should it terminate in no worse consequences. You will be reproached as the messenger of evil tidings, and suspected of taking a pleasure in overwhelming the soul with dark and melancholy forebodings. By a part of your hearers you will possibly be regarded as an unnatural character, and as having in your religion a tincture of what is savage and inhuman; in consequence of which, they who refuse to profit by your admonitions, will be apt to apply to you the language of the king of Israel, *I hate him, for he always prophesieth evil of me, and not good.* Of the common apostasy, one of the most distinguishing features is, a stupefaction and insensibility in relation to whatever is of a spiritual nature, together with a levity and carelessness which it requires the utmost effort of the christian ministry to dispel.

If you should be successful in awakening a salutary concern in the breasts of your hearers, and exciting them to inquire what they must do to be saved, fresh difficulties await you. The enemy will leave no artifice untried to divert it, and to wear it off, by such a succession of cares and vanities, that as much attention and address will be requisite to maintain it till it issues in a saving effect, as to produce it at first. There are many, who, after appearing for the time earnestly engaged in the pursuit of salvation, have, in consequence of stifling convictions, become more callous and insensible than ever, as iron is hardened in the fire. The grand scope of the christian ministry is to bring men home to Christ; but ere they arrive thither, there are numerous by-paths into which those who are awakened are in danger of diverting, and of finding a delusive repose, without coming, as humble penitents, to the foot of the cross. They are equally in danger of catching at premature consolation, and of sinking into listless despondency. *Withhold thy throat from thirst*, said the prophet Jeremiah, *and thy foot from being unshod; but thou saidst, there is no hope, for I have loved strangers, and after them I must go.* In the pursuit of eternal good, the heart is extremely inconstant and irresolute; easily prevailed on, when the peace it is in quest of is delayed, to desist from further seeking. During the first serious impressions, the light which unveils futurity often shines with too feeble a ray to produce that perfect and plenary conviction which permits the mind no longer to vacillate; and the fascination of sensible objects eclipses the powers of the world to come. Nor is there less to be apprehended from any other quarter. The conscience, roused to a just sense of the danger to which the sinner is exposed by his violation of the laws of God, is apt to derive consolation from this very uneasiness; by which means it is possible that the alarm, which is chiefly valuable on account of its tendency to produce a consent to the overtures of the gospel, may ultimately lull the mind into a deceitful repose. The number, we fear, is not small, of those, who, though they have never experienced a saving change, are yet

under no apprehensions respecting their state, merely because they can remember the time when they felt poignant convictions. Mistaking what are usually the preliminary steps to conversion, for conversion itself, they deduce from their former apprehensions an antidote against present fears; and from past prognostics of danger, an omen of their future safety. With persons of this description, the flashes of a superficial joy, arising from a presumption of being already pardoned, accompanied with some slight and transient relishes of the word of God, are substituted for that new birth, and that lively trust in the Redeemer, to which the promise of salvation inseparably belongs. Such were those who received the seed into stony ground, and who, having heard the word of God, *anon with joy received it, but having no depth of earth, it soon withered away.* Others endeavour to soothe the anguish of their minds by a punctual performance of certain religious exercises, and a partial reformation of conduct; in consequence of which they sink into mere formalists; and confounding the instruments of religion with the end, their apparent melioration of character diverts their attention from their real wants, and, by making them insensible of the extent of their malady, obstructs their cure. Instead of imploring the assistance of the great Physician, and implicitly complying with his prescriptions, they have recourse to palliatives, which assuage the anguish and the smart, without reaching the seat, or touching the core, of the disorder.

Were the change, which the gospel proposes to effect, less fundamental and extensive than it is, we might the more easily flatter ourselves with being able to carry its designs into execution. Did it aim merely to polish the exterior, to tame the wildness, and prune the luxuriance of nature, without the implanting of a new principle, the undertaking would be less arduous. But its scope is much higher; it proposes not merely to reform, but to renew; not so much to repair the moral edifice, as to build it afresh; not merely, by the remonstrances of reason, and the dictates of prudence, to engage men to lay a restraint upon their vices, but, by the inspiration of

truth, to become new creatures. The effects of the gospel on the heart are compared, by the prophet, to the planting of a wilderness, where what was barrenness and desolation before, is replenished with new productions. *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar-tree, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box-tree together, that they may know, and consider, and understand, that the hand of the Lord hath done this.* Although the change is frequently slow, and the Spirit of God, in effecting it, may proceed by imperceptible steps and gentle insinuations, the issue is invariably the same; nor can any representation do justice to its dignity. How great the skill requisite in those who are to be the instruments of producing it!

To arrest the attention of the careless, to subdue the pride and soften the obduracy of the human heart, so that it shall stoop to the authority of an unseen Saviour, is a task which surpasses the utmost efforts of human ability, unaided by a superior power. In attempting to realize the design of the christian ministry, we are proposing to call the attention of men from the things which are seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal; to conduct them from a life of sense to a life of faith; to subdue, or weaken at least, the influence of a world, which, being always present, is incessantly appealing to the senses, and soliciting the heart, in favour of a state, whose very existence is ascertained only by testimony. We call upon them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to deny the strongest and most inveterate propensities, and to renounce the enjoyments which they have tasted and felt, for the sake of a happiness to which they have no relish. We must charge *them*, as they value their salvation, not to love the world, who have been accustomed to make it the sole object of their attachment, and to return to their allegiance to that almighty and invisible Ruler from whom they have deeply revolted. We present to them, it is true, *a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined;* we invite them to entertainments more ample and exquisite, than, but for the gospel, it had entered into the heart of man to conceive; but we

address our invitations to minds fatally indisposed, alienated from the life of God, with little sense of the value of his favour, and no delight in his converse. The souls we address, though originally formed for these enjoyments, and utterly incapable of being happy without them, have lost, through the fall, that right taste and apprehension of things, which is requisite for the due appreciation of these blessings; and, like Ezekiel, we prophesy to dry bones in the valley of Vision, which will never live but under the visitation of that breath which bloweth where it listeth. This indisposition to the things of God, so radical and incurable by human power, as it has been a frequent source of discouragement to the faithful minister, so it would prove an invincible obstacle to success, did that success depend upon human agency.

2. To these difficulties, which arise from the nature of the work, abstractedly considered, must be added, those which are modified by a variety of circumstances, and which result from that diversity of temper, character, and situation, which prevails in our auditory. To the several classes of which it consists, it is necessary *rightly to divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion of meat in due season.* The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment; nor will the same prescription suit all cases. A different set of truths, a different mode of address is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, from what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart; nor is it easy to say which we should most anxiously guard against, the infusion of a false peace, or inflaming the wounds which we ought to heal. A loose and indiscriminate manner of applying the promises and threatenings of the gospel, is ill-judged and pernicious; it is not possible to conceive a more effectual method of depriving the sword of the Spirit of its edge, than adopting that lax generality of representation, which leaves its hearer nothing to apply, presents no incentive to self-ex-

amination, and, besides its utter inefficiency, disgusts by the ignorance of human nature, or the disregard to its best interests, it infallibly betrays. Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgement, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump, will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will *mourn apart*. It is thus the christian minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself.

To men of different casts and complexions, it is obvious, a corresponding difference in the selection of topics, and the method of appeal, is requisite. Some are only capable of digesting the first principles of religion, on whom it is necessary often to inculcate the same lessons, with the reiteration of parental solicitude: there are others of a wider grasp of comprehension, who must be indulged with an ampler variety, and to whom views of religion less obvious, less obtrusive, and demanding a more vigorous exercise of the understanding, are peculiarly adapted. Some are accustomed to contemplate every subject in a light so cool and argumentative, that they are not easily impressed with any thing which is not presented in the garb of reasoning; nor apt, though firm believers in Revelation, to be strongly moved by naked assertions, even from that quarter. There are others of a softer temperament, who are more easily won by tender strokes of pathos. Minds of an obdurate make, and

which have been rendered callous by long habits of vice, must be appalled and subdued by the terrors of the Lord; while others are capable of being *drawn with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. Some we must save with fear, plucking them out of the fire; on others we must have compassion, making a difference.* You will recollect that he who spake as never man spake, mild, gentle, insinuating in his addresses to the multitude, reserved the thunder of his denunciations for sanctimonious hypocrites. In this part of our ministerial function, we shall do well to imitate St. Paul, who became "all things to all men, that he might win some;" combining, in his efforts for the salvation of souls, the utmost simplicity of intention with the utmost versatility of address.

May I be permitted to remark, though it seem a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons, we indulge too little variety, and, exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity, by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance? Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion derived from just and affecting sentiments, be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address? I cannot but imagine the first preachers of the gospel appeared before their audience with a more free and unfettered air than is consistent with the narrow trammels to which, in these latter ages, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The sublime emotions with which they were fraught, would have rendered them impatient of such restrictions; nor could they suffer the impetuous stream of argument, expostulation, and pathos, to be weakened, by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs, prepared in the heads and particulars of a modern sermon. Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the

method, not the method for the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient eloquence; let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes' bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages, will instantly evaporate; yet no one perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can any thing be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody.

To return to the subject: whatever the mode of address, or whatever the choice of topics, these are two qualities inseparable from religious instruction; these are *seriousness* and *affection*. In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while with unsparing fidelity we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the word of God, is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight on our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips; and we may then expect them to realize its solemn import, when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it. "Of whom I have told you before," said St. Paul, and "now tell you *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." What force does that affecting declaration derive from those tears! An affectionate manner insinuates itself into the heart, renders it soft and pliable, and disposes it to imbibe the sentiments and follow the impulse of the speaker. Whoever has attended to the effect of addresses from the pulpit, must have perceived how much of their impression depends upon this quality, which gives to sentiments comparatively trite, a power over the mind beyond what the most striking and original conceptions possess without it.

Near akin to this, and not inferior in importance, is the second quality we have mentioned, *seriousness*. It

is scarcely necessary to remark, how offensive and unnatural is every violation of it in a religious discourse, which is, however, of wider extent than is generally imagined, including not merely jesting, buffoonery, and undisguised levity of every sort, but also whatsoever, in composition or manner, is inconsistent with the supposition of the speaker being deeply in earnest; such as sparkling ornaments, far-fetched images, and that exuberance of flowers which seems evidently designed to gratify the fancy, rather than to touch the heart. When St Paul recommends to Timothy that *sound speech which cannot be condemned*, it is probable he refers as much to the propriety of the vehicle, as to the purity of the instruction. There is, permit me to remind you, a sober dignity both of language and of sentiment, suited to the representations of religion in all its variety of topics, from which the inspired writers never depart, and which it will be our wisdom to imitate. In describing the pleasures of devotion, or the joys of heaven, there is nothing weak, sickly, or effeminate: a chaste severity pervades their delineations, and whatever they say appears to emanate from a serious mind, accustomed to the contemplation of great objects, without ever sinking under them from imbecility, or attempting to supply a deficiency of interest, by puerile exaggerations and feeble ornaments. The exquisite propriety of their representations is chiefly to be ascribed to their habitual seriousness; and the latter to their seeing things as they are.

3. Having touched on the principal difficulties attending the *public* exercise of the ministry, it may be expected something will be said on its more private functions. To affirm it to be the duty of a pastor to visit his people *often*, is, perhaps, affirming too much; the more frequently he converses with them, however, provided his conversation be properly conducted, the more will his person be endeared, and his ministry acceptable. The seasonable introduction of religious topics is often of such admirable use, that there are few qualities more enviable than the talent of "teaching from house to house;" though the modern state of manners, I am aware, has

rendered this branch of the pastoral office much more difficult than in former times. In a country village, where there is more simplicity, less dissipation, and less hurry of business than in large towns, prudent exertions of this kind may be considered as eminently proper and beneficial. The extent to which they should be carried must be determined by circumstances, without attempting to prescribe any other rule than this, that the conversation of a christian minister should be always such as is adapted to strengthen, not impair, the impression of his public instructions. Though it is not necessary, nor expedient, for him to be always conversing on the subject of religion, his conversation should invariably have a religious tendency; that whatever excursions he indulges, the return to serious topics may be easy and natural. The whole cast of his character should be such as is adapted to give weight to the exercise of his ministerial functions. On the peculiar force with which the obligations of virtue attach to a christian teacher, the purity and correctness of your own conduct, while it would embolden me to speak with the greater freedom, make it less necessary for me to insist. You are aware that moral delinquency in *him*, produces a sensation as when an armour-bearer fainteth; that he can neither stand nor fall by himself; and that it is impossible for him to deviate essentially from the path of rectitude, without incurring the guilt and infamy of Jeroboam, who is never mentioned but to be stigmatized as he *who taught Israel to sin. Be thou an ensample to the flock in faith, in purity, in conversation, in doctrine, in charity.* Instead of satisfying ourselves in the acquisition of virtue with the attainments of a learner, we must aspire to the perfection of a master; and give to our conduct the correctness of a pattern. We are called to such a conquest over the world, and such an exhibition of the spirit of Christ, as shall not merely exempt us from censure, but excite to emulation. *Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world*, said our Saviour to his disciples, whom he was about to send forth in the character of public teachers. As persons to whom the conduct of souls is committed

we cannot make a wrong step without endangering the interests of others; so that if we neglect to take our soundings, and inspect our chart, ours is the misconduct of the pilot, who is denied the privilege of perishing alone. The immoral conduct of a christian minister is little less than a public triumph over the religion he inculcates: and when we recollect the frailty of our nature, the snares to which we are exposed, and the wiles of our adversary, who will proportion his efforts to the advantages resulting from his success, we must be aware how much the necessity of maintaining an exemplary conduct adds to the difficulty of the ministerial function.

With the utmost propriety of conduct, and the greatest skill exerted in your work, we dare not flatter you with the prospect of unmingled success. Under the most judicious method of treatment, the maladies of some will prove incurable, and they will perish under your hand. While to some the gospel is a *savour of life unto life*, to others it will prove *the savour of death unto death;* and in the course of your labours you will meet with frequent disappointments where you have formed the most sanguine expectations. *Some who did run well, will afterwards be hindered; and of others, who have clean escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being afterwards entangled therein, the latter end will be worse than the beginning.* Many a Demas, it is probable, will forsake you, *having loved this present world;* and by many of your hearers, who now evince the most zealous attachment, you may hereafter be considered as an enemy, because you tell them the truth. In certain instances, your ministry will be attended with consequences which you cannot contemplate without deep concern; for the sword of the Spirit is an awful weapon, which will exert, where it fails to inflict a salutary wound, its *destructive* edge. Against those of your hearers who reject your message, though now an ambassador of peace, and often a weeping suppliant at their feet, you will ere long appear a swift witness before God, and be compelled by your voice to exasperate the accents

of vengeance, and augment the vials of wrath. *You are set for the rising and falling of many in Israel.*

II. But it is time to turn to a more pleasing part of our subject, and to remind you of some of the supports by which these sources of discouragement are balanced.

1. The office you have undertaken is of divine institution. The unhappy disputes which have prevailed in the church respecting the proper channels for conveying, and the legitimate mode of vesting it, are so far from weakening or perplexing the evidence of this truth, that they may be considered as so many concurrent suffrages in its favour; since it is allowed, on all hands, that the christian ministry is an ordinance of God; an expedient for the improvement of mankind, of his devising, and supported by his authority. But of that wisdom which pervades the works of God, the church is the principal scene; *to the intent*, saith the apostle, *that to principalities and powers, might be made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.* Hence we may be certain, that so leading a branch of its constitution as that under our consideration cannot fail of being adapted, in the best possible manner, to promote the interest of religion; nor is it difficult to perceive, that if men are to be wrought upon by reason and persuasion, the setting apart an order for the express purpose of instructing them in the concerns of salvation must have a beneficial tendency; an order, be it remembered, not appointed like the priests of pagan antiquity, for the performance of ceremonies, but for the inculcation of truth; not to conduct the pomp of lustrations and sacrifices, but to *watch for souls as those that must give an account.* Nothing similar to this was known in the heathen religions; it is peculiar to christianity, and evincing the simple wisdom of its author, is as original in its conception, as it is admirable in its effects. Its simplicity, its distance from whatever is dazzling in the eyes of mankind, is one of its highest recommendations; for the christian minister is beautifully compared to a fisherman, who would only be embarrassed by those instruments and appendages which belong to more splendid, but less useful employments.

2. Another consideration calculated to afford us encouragement is, that the materials of our work are ready furnished to our hand, and, at the same time, of a nature admirably adapted to our purpose. Our office is that of stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom; our duty, faithfully to dispense the stores which superior wisdom and opulence have provided. It is not necessary for us to stretch our invention in the discovery of topics and arguments fitted to move the mind, and impel it in a right direction, which, if we may judge from past experience, would be a most unpromising undertaking. A doctrine, full, pure, perfect, to which nothing can be added without debasing its spirit, nothing taken away without impairing its proportions, is committed to our trust, to be retained and preserved, just as we have received it, and delivered to our hearers in all its primitive simplicity. Like the works of nature, while it exhibits, at first view, an impress of its author, in the unequivocal character it bears of purity and majesty, it improves on a closer examination, and the more deeply it is investigated, the more the wisdom of the contrivance, in its exquisite adaptation to the state and condition of mankind, becomes conspicuous. As the discovery of a way of salvation for a fallen race, of the method by which a guilty and degenerate creature may recover the image and favour of his Maker, which we must ever remember is its most essential characteristic, what is wanting to its perfection? what information or assurance beyond what it contains, calculated to awe, enlighten, convince, and encourage? The facts it exhibits, supported by clear and indubitable testimony, are more extraordinary than ever entered the mind of man in its widest excursions, combining all the sobriety of truth, with more than the grandeur of fiction; and the doctrines connected with these facts, by the easiest and most natural inference, are of infinite moment. To a serious mind,

the truths of the christian religion appear with such an air of unaffected greatness, that, in comparison with these, all other speculations and reasonings seem like the amusements of childhood. When the Deity, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of the Son of God, the sanctification of the church, and the prospects of glory, have engaged our contemplation, we feel, in turning our attention to other objects, a strange descent, and perceive, with the certainty of demonstration, that, as the earth is too narrow for the full developement of these mysteries, they are destined by their consequences and effects, to impregnate an eternal duration. We are not at all surprised at finding the ancient prophets searched into these mysteries with great but unsuccessful diligence, that the angels desire to look into them, or that the apostles were lost in the contemplation of those riches which they proclaimed and imparted. Are you desirous of fixing the attention of your hearers strongly on their everlasting concerns? No peculiar refinement of thought, no subtlety of reasoning, much less the pompous exaggerations of secular eloquence, are wanted for that purpose: you have only to imbibe deeply the mind of Christ, to let his doctrine enlighten, his love inspire your heart, and your situation, in comparison of other speakers, will resemble that of the angel of the apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun. Draw your instructions immediately from the Bible; the more immediately they are derived from that source, and the less they are tinctured with human distinctions and refinements, the more salutary, and the more efficacious. Let them be taken fresh from the spring. *You*, I am persuaded, will not satisfy yourself with the study of Christianity in narrow jejune abridgements and systems, but contemplate it, in its utmost extent, as it subsists in the sacred oracles; and, in investigating these, you will permit your reason and conscience an operation, as free and unfettered, as if none had examined them before. The neglect of this produces, too often, an artificial scarcity, where some of the choicest provisions of the household are exploded or overlooked

When we inculcate, with so much earnestness, an attention to the mind of Christ, as exhibited in the Scriptures, let us not be understood to exclude his precepts, or to countenance, for a moment, the too frequent neglect of Christian morality. While you delight in displaying the riches of divine grace, conspicuous in the work of redemption, as the grand motive to love and trust in the Redeemer, you will not forget frequently to admonish your hearers that he only *loveth him who keepeth his sayings;* the illustration of which, in their bearings upon the different relations and circumstances of life, will form, if you follow the apostolic example, a most important branch of your ministry. Not content with committing the obligation of morality to the arbitration of feeling, much less with faintly hinting at it, as an obvious inference from orthodox doctrine, you will illustrate its principles with an energy, a copiousness, a fulness of detail, proportioned to its acknowledged importance. You will not be silent on the precepts, from an apprehension of infringing on the freedom of the gospel, nor sink the character of the legislator in that of the Saviour of the church. A morality more elevated and pure than is to be met with in the pages of Seneca or Epictetus will breathe through your sermons, founded on a basis which every understanding can comprehend, and enforced by sanctions which nothing but the utmost stupidity can despise—a morality, of which the love of God, and a devoted attachment to the Redeemer, are the plastic soul, which, pervading every limb, and expressing itself in every lineament of the new creature, gives it a beauty all its own. As it is the genuine fruit of just and affecting views of divine truth, you will never sever it from its parent stock, nor indulge the fruitless hope of leading men to holiness, without strongly imbuing them with the spirit of the gospel. Truth and holiness are, in the christian system, so intimately allied, that the warm and faithful inculcation of the one lays the only foundation for the other. For the *illustration* of particular branches of morals, we may consult pagan writers on ethics with advantage; but in

search of *principles*, it is at our peril that we desert the school of Christ; since "we are complete in him," and all the moral excellence to which we can aspire is but christianity embodied; or, if we may be allowed to change the figure, the impress of the gospel upon the heart. The perfection of the christian system, considered as the instrument of renovating the human mind, is the second consideration.

3. The third consideration to which I would direct your attention, is, that of its being the dispensation of the Spirit. To this the apostle immediately refers in the context, where he is contrasting the Christian with the Jewish institute. *Who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be more glorious?* From this circumstance he infers the superior dignity of the christian ministry. The miraculous gifts, intended for a sign to unbelievers, and to aid the gospel, during its first struggle with the powers of pagan darkness, have long since ceased with the exigency that called them forth; but the renewing and sanctifying agency of the Spirit remains, and will continue to the end of time; the express declaration of our Saviour not admitting a doubt of its perpetuity. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* To the world, who, in their unrenewed state, are unsusceptible of his sanctifying impress, he is promised in the preparatory form of a spirit of conviction; to believers, he is promised as an indwelling principle, an ever-present Deity, who consecrates the hearts of the faithful to be his perpetual abode. Hence the ministers of Christ are not dependent for success on the force of moral suasion; not merely the teachers of an external religion, including truths the most momentous, and duties of the highest obligation;

they are also the instruments through whom a supernatural agency is exerted. And hence, in the conversion of souls, we are not to compare the difficulties to be surmounted with the feeble resources of human power, but with his, with whom nothing is impossible. To this the inspired historian every where directs our attention, as alone sufficient to account for the signal success which crowned the labours of the first preachers. If a great multitude at Antioch turned to the Lord, it was because *the hand of the Lord was with them;* if Lydia believed, in consequence of giving attention to the things that were spoken, it was because the *Lord opened her heart;* if Paul planted and Apollos watered with success, it was *the Lord who gave the increase;* and highly as they were endowed, and though invested with such extensive authority, they did not presume to count upon any thing from themselves; their sufficiency was of God. As the possibility of such an influence can be doubted by none who believe in a Deity, so the peculiar consolation derived from the doctrine that asserts it seems to be this, that it renders what was merely possible, certain; what was before vague and undetermined, fixed, by reducing the interposition of the Almighty, in the concerns of salvation, to a stated method and a settled law. The communication of the Spirit, to render the gospel efficacious, becomes a standing ordinance of heaven, and a full security for its final triumph over every opposing force. *My word*, said the Lord by the prophet, *shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish the thing whereunto I sent it.* At the same time, connected as it is by the very tenour of the promise, with the publication of an external revelation, and professing to set its seal only to the testimony of Jesus, it precludes, as far as possible, every enthusiastic pretension, by leaving the appeal to scripture as full and uncontrolled as if no such agency were supposed. It is strange that any should be found to deny a doctrine so consolatory, under the pretence of its derogating from the sufficiency of Revelation, when it not only ascribes to it all the efficacy that can belong to an instrument, or external means, but

confers the highest honour upon it, by marking it out as the only fountain of instruction to which the agency of the Deity is inseparably attached. The idea of his immediate interposition must necessarily increase our veneration for whatever is connected with it; and let it ever be remembered, that the internal illumination of the Spirit is merely intended to qualify the mind for distinctly perceiving, and cordially embracing those objects, and no other, which are exhibited in the written word. To dispel prejudice, to excite a disposition for inquiry, and to infuse that love of the truth, without which we can neither be transformed by its power nor bow to its dictates, is the grand scope of spiritual agency; and how this should derogate from the dignity of the truth itself, it is not easy to conceive. The inseparable alliance between the Spirit and the Word secures the harmony of the divine dispensations; and since that Spirit of truth can never contradict himself, whatever impulse he may give, whatever disposition he may communicate, it involves no irreverence towards that divine agent to compare his operations with that standing revelation, which, equally claiming him for its author, he has expressly appointed for the trial of the spirits.

Let me earnestly entreat you, by keeping close to the fountain of grace, to secure a large measure of its influence. In your private studies, and in your public performances, remember your absolute dependence on superior aid; let your conviction of this dependence become so deep and practical as to prevent your attempting any thing in your own strength, after the example of St. Paul, who, when he had occasion to advert to his labours in the gospel, checks himself by adding, with ineffable modesty, *yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* From that vivid perception of truth, that full assurance of faith, which is its inseparable attendant, you will derive unspeakable advantage in addressing your hearers; a seriousness, tenderness, and majesty, will pervade your discourses, beyond what the greatest unassisted talent can command. In the choice of your subjects it will lead you to what is most solid and useful, while it enables you

to handle them in a manner the most efficacious and impressive. Possessed of this celestial unction, you will not be under the temptation of neglecting a plain gospel in quest of amusing speculations, or unprofitable novelties; the most ordinary topics will open themselves with a freshness and interest, as though you had never considered them before: and *the things of the Spirit* will display their inexhaustible variety and depth. You will pierce the invisible world; you will look, so to speak, into eternity, and present the essence and core of religion, while too many preachers, for want of spiritual discernment, rest satisfied with the surface and the shell. It will not allow us to throw one grain of incense on the altar of vanity; it will make us forget ourselves so completely as to convince our hearers we do so; and, displacing every thing else from the attention, leave nothing to be felt or thought of, but the majesty of truth, and the realities of eternity.

In proportion to the degree in which you possess this sacred influence, will be the earnestness with which you implore it in behalf of your hearers. Often *will you bow the knee to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will grant unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of their calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance among them that believe.*

On the one hand, it deserves attention, that the most eminent and successful preachers of the gospel in different communities, a Brainerd, a Baxter, and a Schwartz, have been the most conspicuous for a simple dependence upon spiritual aid; and, on the other, that no success whatever has attended the ministrations of those by whom this doctrine has been either neglected or denied. They have met with such a rebuke of their presumption, in the total failure of their efforts, that none will contend for the reality of divine interposition, as far as *they* are concerned; for when has "the arm of the Lord been revealed" to those pretended teachers of christianity, who believe there is no such arm? We must leave them to

labour in a field, respecting which God has commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. As if conscious of this, of late they have turned their efforts into a new channel, and, despairing of the conversion of sinners, have confined themselves to the seduction of the faithful; in which, it must be confessed, they have acted in a manner perfectly consistent with their principles; the propagation of heresy requiring, at least, no *divine* assistance.

4. Let me request you to consider the dignity and importance of the profession which you have assumed. I am aware that the bare mention of these, as attributes of the christian ministry (especially when exercised among Protestant dissenters), may provoke a smile: we contend, however, that if the dignity of an employment is to be estimated, not by the glitter of external appearances, but by the magnitude and duration of the consequences involved in its success, the ministerial function is a high and honourable one. Though it is not permitted us to magnify ourselves, we may be allowed to magnify our office; and, indeed, the juster the apprehensions we entertain of what belongs to it, the deeper the conviction we shall feel of our defects. Independently of every other consideration, that office cannot be mean which the Son of God condescended to sustain; for *the word which we preach first began to be spoken by the Lord;* and, while he sojourned upon earth, that Prince of life was chiefly employed in publishing his own religion. That office cannot be mean, whose end is the recovery of man to his original purity and happiness—the illumination of the understanding—the communication of truth—and the production of principles which will bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. As the material part of the creation was formed for the sake of the immaterial; and of the latter the most momentous characteristic is its moral and accountable nature, or, in other words, its capacity of virtue and vice; that labour cannot want dignity, which is exerted in improving man in his highest character, and fitting him for his eternal destination. Here alone is certainty and durability: for, however highly we may esteem the arts and sciences, which polish our species

and promote the welfare of society; whatever reverence we may feel, and ought to feel, for those laws and institutions whence it derives the security necessary for enabling it to enlarge its resources and develope its energies, we cannot forget that these are but the embellishments of a scene we must shortly quit—the decorations of a theatre, from which the eager spectators and applauded actors must soon retire. *The end of all things is at hand.* Vanity is inscribed on every earthly pursuit, on all sublunary labour; its materials, its instruments, and its objects will alike perish. An incurable taint of mortality has seized upon, and will consume them ere long. The acquisitions derived from religion, the graces of a renovated mind, are alone permanent. This is the mystic enclosure, rescued from the empire of change and death; this is the field which the Lord has blessed; and this word of the kingdom the seed, which alone produces immortal fruit, the very bread of life, with which, under a higher economy, the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, will feed his flock, and replenish his elect, through eternal ages. How high and awful a function is that which proposes to establish in the soul an interior dominion—to illuminate its powers by a celestial light—and introduce it to an intimate, ineffable, and unchanging alliance with the Father of spirits! What an honour to be employed as the instrument of conducting that mysterious process by which men are born of God; to expel from the heart the venom of the old serpent; to purge the conscience from invisible stains of guilt; to release the passions from the bondage of corruption, and invite them to soar aloft into the regions of uncreated light and beauty; *to say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves!* These are the fruits which arise from the successful discharge of the christian ministry; these the effects of the gospel, wherever it becomes the power of God unto salvation: and the interests which they create, the joy which they diffuse, are felt in other worlds.

In insisting on the dignity attached to the ministerial office, it is far from my intention to supply fuel to vanity,

or suggest such ideas of yourself as shall tempt you to "lord it over God's heritage." Let the importance of your station be rather felt and acknowledged in its beneficial results, than ostentatiously displayed; and the consciousness of it, instead of being suffered to evaporate in authoritative airs and pompous pretensions, produce a concentration of your powers. If the great apostle was content to be a helper of the joy, without claiming dominion over the faith, of his converts, how far should we be from advancing such a claim! If he served the Lord with humility and many tears; if he appeared among the churches which he planted, "in fear, and in weakness, and with much trembling," we may learn how possible it is to combine, with true dignity, the most unassuming deportment, and the deepest conviction of our weakness and unworthiness, with a vigorous discharge of whatever belongs to the apostolic, much more to the pastoral, office. The proper use to be made of such considerations as have now been suggested is, to *stir up the gift which is in us*, to apply ourselves to our work with becoming resolution, and anticipate, in dependence on the divine blessing, important effects. The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the christian ministry, our right arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains. For no man ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm; though what in other professions is enthusiasm, is, in ours, the dictate of sobriety and truth.

5. Recollect, for your encouragement, the reward that awaits the faithful minister. Such is the mysterious condescension of divine grace, that although it reserves to itself the exclusive honour of being the fountain of all, yet, by the employment of human agency in the completion of its designs, it contrives to multiply its gifts, and to lay a foundation for eternal rewards. When the church, in the perfection of beauty, shall be presented to Christ, as a bride adorned for her husband, the faithful pastor will appear as the friend of the bridegroom, who *greatly rejoices because of the bridegroom's voice.* His

joy will be the joy of his Lord, inferior in degree, but of the same nature, and arising from the same sources: while he will have the peculiar happiness of reflecting that he has contributed to it; contributed, as an humble instrument, to that glory and felicity of which he will be conscious he is utterly unworthy to partake. To have been himself the object of mercy, to have been the means of imparting it to others, and of dispensing the unsearchable riches of Christ, will produce a pleasure which can never be adequately felt or understood, until we see him as he is. From that oneness of spirit, from that inseparable conjunction of interest, which will then be experienced in its utmost extent, will arise a capacity of sharing the triumph of the Redeemer, and of participating in the delight with which he will survey his finished work, when a new and fairer creation shall arise out of the ruins of the first. And is this the end, he will exclaim, of all my labours, my toils, and watchings, my expostulation with sinners, and my efforts to console the faithful! and is this the issue of that ministry under which I was often ready to sink! and this the glory, of which I heard so much, understood so little, and announced to my hearers with lisping accents, and a stammering tongue! well might it be styled the glory *to be revealed.* Auspicious day! on which I embarked in this undertaking, on which the love of Christ, with a sweet and sacred violence, impelled me to feed his sheep and to feed his lambs. With what emotion shall we, who, being entrusted with so holy a ministry, shall find mercy to be faithful, hear that voice from heaven, *Rejoice and be glad, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!* with what rapture shall we recognize, amidst an innumerable multitude, the seals of our ministry, the persons whom we have been the means of conducting to that glory!

Hence we discern the futility of the objection against the doctrine of future rewards, drawn from an apprehension, that to be actuated by such a motive, argues a mean and mercenary disposition; since the reward to which we aspire, in this instance, at least, grows out of the em-

ployment in which we are engaged, and will consist in enjoyments which can only be felt and perceived by a refined and elevated spirit. The success of our undertaking will, in reality, reward itself, by the complete gratification it will afford to the sentiments of devotion and benevolence, which, in their highest perfection, form the principal ingredient in future felicity. To have co-operated in any degree towards the accomplishment of that purpose of the Deity to reconcile all things to himself, by reducing them to the obedience of his Son; which is the ultimate end of all his works: to be the means of recovering, though it were but an inconsiderable portion of a lapsed and degenerate race, to eternal happiness, will yield a satisfaction exactly commensurate to the force of our benevolent sentiments, and the degree of our loyal attachment to the supreme Potentate. The consequences involved in *saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins*, will be duly appreciated in that world where the worth of souls, and the malignity of sin, are fully understood; while, to extend the triumphs of the Redeemer, by forming him in the hearts of men, will produce a transport which can only be equalled by the gratitude and love we shall feel towards the Source of all our good.

Before I close this discourse, which has, perhaps, already detained you too long, let me suggest one reflection which so naturally arises from the view we have taken of the ministerial office, that I cannot think it right to pass it over in silence. The consideration to which we allude respects the advantages possessed by the christian minister for the cultivation of personal piety. *Blessed is the man*, said the royal Psalmist, *whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee: blessed are they who dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.* If he was so strongly impressed with a conviction of the high privilege annexed to the priesthood, by virtue of its being allowed a nearer approach to God, in the services of the sanctuary, the situation of a christian minister is not less distinguished, nor less desirable. It is the only one in which our general calling as christians,

and our particular calling as men, perfectly coincide. In a life occupied in actions that terminate in the present moment, and in cares and pursuits, extremely disproportionate to the dignity of our nature, but rendered necessary by the imperfection of our state; it is but little of their time that the greater part of mankind can devote to the direct and immediate pursuit of their eternal interests. A few remnants, snatched from the business of life, is all that most can bestow. In our profession, the full force and vigour of the mind may be exerted on that which will employ it for ever; on *religion*, the final centre of repose; the goal to which all things tend, which gives to time all its importance, to eternity all its glory; apart from which man is a shadow, his very existence a riddle, and the stupendous scenes which surround him, as incoherent and unmeaning as the leaves which the Sybil scattered in the wind. Our inaptitude to be affected in any measure proportioned to the intrinsic value of the interest in which we are concerned, and the objects with which we are conversant, is partly to be ascribed to the corruption of nature, partly to the limitation of our faculties. As far as this disproportion is capable of being corrected, the pursuits connected with our office are unquestionably best adapted to that purpose, by closely fixing the attention on objects which can never be contemned, but in consequence of being forgotten; nor ever surveyed with attention, without filling the whole sphere of vision. Though the scene of our labour is on earth, the things to which it relates subsist in eternity. We can give no account of our office, much less discharge any branch of it with propriety and effect, without adverting to a future state of being; while, in a happy exemption from the tumultuous cares of life, our only concern with mankind, as far as it respects our official character, is to promote their everlasting welfare; our only business on earth, the very same that employs those exalted spirits, who are sent forth on embassies of mercy, *to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation.* Our duties and pursuits are distinguished from all others by their immediate relation to the ultimate end of human existence;

so that, while secular employments can be rendered innocent only by an extreme care to avoid the pollutions which they are so liable to contract, the ministerial functions bear an indelible impress of sanctity. The purposes accomplished by the ministry of the gospel, in the restoration of a fallen creature to the image of his Maker, are not among the *things which were made for man:* they are the *things for which man was made;* since, without regard to time or place, they are essential to his perfection and happiness. How much of heaven is naturally connected with an office whose sole purpose is to conduct man thither! and what a superiority to the love of the world may be expected from men who are appointed to publish that dispensation which reveals its danger, detects its vanity, rebukes its disorders, and foretells its destruction!

He must know little of the world, and still less of his own heart, who is not aware how difficult it is, amidst the corrupting examples with which it abounds, to maintain the spirit of devotion unimpaired, or to preserve, in their due force and delicacy, those vivid moral impressions, that quick perception of good, and instinctive abhorrence of evil, which form the chief characteristic of a pure and elevated mind. These, like the morning dew, are easily brushed off in the collisions of worldly interest, or exhaled by the meridian sun. Hence the necessity of frequent intervals of retirement, when the mind may recover its scattered powers, and renew its strength by a devout application to the Fountain of all grace.

To the ordinary occupations of life we are rather indebted for the trial of our virtue than for the matter, or the motive; and, however criminal it would be to neglect them, in our present state, they can only be reduced under the dominion of religion, by a general intention of pleasing God. But, in carrying into effect the designs of the gospel, we are communicating that pure element of good, which, like the solar light, pervades every part of the universe, and forms, there is every reason to believe, the most essential ingredient in the felicity of all created beings.

If, in the actual commerce of the world, the noblest principles are often sacrificed to mean expedients, and the rules of moral rectitude made to bend to the indulgence of vain and criminal passions, how happy for us that we are under the necessity of contemplating them in their abstract grandeur, of viewing them as an emanation of the divine beauty: as the immutable law of the creation, embodied in the character of the Saviour, and illustrated in the elevated sentiments, the holy lives, and triumphant deaths, of prophets, saints, and martyrs! *We* are called, every moment, to ascend to first principles, *to stand in the council of God*, and to imbibe the dictates of celestial wisdom in their *first* communication, before they become debased, and contaminated, by a mixture with grosser elements.

The bane of human happiness is ordinarily not so much an absolute ignorance of what is best, as an inattention to it, accompanied with a habit of not adverting to prospects the most certain and the most awful. But how can we be supposed to contract this inadvertence, who are incessantly engaged in placing truth in every possible light, tracing it in its utmost extent, and exhibiting it in all its evidence? Can we be supposed to forget *that day and that hour, of which no man knoweth*, who are stationed as watchmen to give the alarm, to announce the first symptoms of danger, and to cry in the ears of a sleeping world, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh:* or, however inattentive others may be to the approach of our Lord, can it ever vanish from our minds, who are detained by him in his sanctuary, on purpose to preserve it pure, to trim the golden lamps, and maintain the hallowed fire, that he may find nothing neglected, or in disorder, when he *shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom we delight in?*

Men are ruined in their eternal interests, by failing to look within; by being so absorbed in the pursuit of earthly good, as to neglect the state of their own hearts. But can this be supposed to be the case with us, who must never hope to discharge our office with effect, without an intimate acquaintance with the inward man—

without tracing the secret operations of nature and of grace—without closely inspecting the causes of revival, and of decay, in the spiritual life, and detecting the most secret springs and plausible artifices of temptation; in all which we shall be successful, just in proportion to the degree of devout attention we bestow on the movements of our own minds.

Men are ruined in their eternal interests by living as though they were their own, and neglecting to realize the certainty of a future account. But it must surely require no small effort to divert our attention from this truth, wnc have not only the same interest in it with others, but, in consequence of the care of souls, possess a responsibility of a distinct and awful character; since not one of those to whom that care extends, can fall short of salvation through our neglect or default, but *his blood will be required at our hands.* Where, in short, can we turn our eyes, without meeting with incentives to piety? What part of the sacred function can we touch, which will not remind us of the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, and the emptiness of all sublunary good; or, where shall we not find ourselves in a temple, resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations?

I feel a pleasing conviction, that, in consequence of deriving from your ministry that spiritual aid it is so adapted to impart, both your piety and usefulness will continue to increase, and by being intimately incorporated, aid and strengthen each other; so that your profiting shall appear unto all men, and while you are watering others, you yourself shall be abundantly watered of God. Thus will you be enabled to adopt the language of the beloved apostle, *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you.* Thus will you possess that unction from which your hearers cannot fail, under the divine blessing, to reap the highest benefit; for while we are exploring the mines of revelation, for the purpose of exhibiting to mankind the *unsearchable riches of Christ;* we are not in the situation of those unhappy men, who

merely toil for the advantage of others, and dare not appropriate to themselves an atom of that precious ore, on which their labour is employed: we are permitted and invited, first to enrich ourselves, and the more we appropriate, the more shall we impart. It is my earnest prayer, my dear brother, *that you may feed the church of the Lord which he has purchased with his own blood; that you may make full proof of your ministry; be instant in season and out of season; teach, exhort, and rebuke, with all long-suffering, and authority.* Then, should you be spared to your flock, you will witness the fruit of your labours in a spiritual plantation, growing under your hand, adorned with *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified;* and while neglecting worldly considerations, you are intent on the high ends of your calling, inferior satisfactions will not be wanting, but you will meet among the seals of your ministry, with fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers. Or should your career be prematurely cut short, you will have lived long enough to answer the purposes of your being, and to leave a record in the consciences of your hearers, which will not suffer you soon to be forgotten. Though dead, you will still speak; you will speak from the tomb; it may be, in accents more powerful and persuasive, than your living voice could command.*

* Of this we have a striking instance in the premature death of the late Mr. Spencer, of Liverpool. The sensation excited by the sudden removal of that extraordinary young man, accompanied with such affecting circumstances, has not subsided, nor abated, as we are informed, much of its force. The event, which has drawn so great a degree of attention, has been well improved in several excellent discourses on the occasion. The unequalled admiration he excited while living, and the deep and universal concern expressed at his death, demonstrate him to have been no ordinary character; but one of those rare specimens of human nature, which the great Author of it produces at distant intervals, and exhibits for a moment, while he is hastening to *make them up amongst his jewels.* The high hopes entertained of this admirable youth, and the shock, approaching to consternation, occasioned by his death, will, probably, remind the classical reader of the inimitable lines of Virgil on Marcellus.

> O nate, ingentem luctum ne quære tuorum
> Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
> Esse sinent.

The writer of this deeply regrets his never having had an opportunity of witnessing his extraordinary powers; but from all he has heard from the best judges, he can entertain no doubt, that his talents in the pulpit were unrivalled, and that, had his life been spared, he would, in all probability, have carried the art of preaching, if it may be so styled, to a greater perfection than it ever attained, at least, in this kingdom. His eloquence appears to have been of the purest stamp, effective, not ostentatious, consisting less in the striking preponderance of any one quality, requisite to form a public speaker, than in an exquisite combination of them all; whence resulted an extraordinary power of impression, which was greatly aided by a natural and majestic elocution. To these eminent endowments, he added, from the unanimous testimony of those who knew him best, a humility and modesty, which, while they concealed a great part of his excellencies from himself, rendered them the more engaging and attractive. When we reflect on these circumstances, we need the less wonder at the passionate concern excited by his death. For it may truly be said of him, as of St. Stephen, *that devout men made great lamentation over him.* May the impressions produced by the event never be effaced; and, above all, may it have the effect of engaging such as are embarked in the Christian ministry to *work while it is called to-day.*

AN ADDRESS,

TO

THE REV. EUSTACE CAREY,

JANUARY 19, 1814.

ON HIS DESIGNATION AS A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY TO INDIA.

AN ADDRESS.

As it has been usual, in the designation of a Missionary, after solemnly commending him to God by prayer, to deliver a short address; in compliance with a custom, not perhaps improper, or illaudable, I shall request your attention to a few hints of advice, without attempting a regular charge, which I neither judge myself equal to, nor deem necessary, since on your arrival in India you will receive from your venerable relative, Dr. Carey, instruction more ample and appropriate than it is in my power to communicate.

When the first Missionaries who visited these western parts were sent out, their designation was accompanied with prayer and fasting; whence we may infer that fervent supplication ought to form the distinguishing feature in the exercises appropriated to these occasions.

An effusion of the spirit of prayer on the church of Christ is a surer pledge of success in the establishment of Missions, than the most splendid exhibitions of talent. As there is no engagement more entirely spiritual in its nature, nor whose success is more immediately dependent on God than that on which you are entering; to none is that spiritual aid more indispensably necessary, which is chiefly awarded to the prayers of the faithful.

Separate to me, said the Holy Ghost to the disciples assembled at Antioch, *separate to me Barnabas and Saul, to the work whereunto I have called them.* When the omniscient Searcher of hearts separates a christian minister from his brethren, and assigns him a distinct work, it implies the previous perception of certain qualifications for its successful discharge not generally possessed; for though none can give the increase but God, much of his wisdom is to be traced in the selection of instruments fitted to his purpose. The first and most essential qualification for a Missionary is a decided predilection for the office; not the effect of sudden impulse, but of serious,

deep consideration; a predilection strengthened and matured by deliberately counting the cost. Every man has his proper calling; and while the greater part of christian teachers are perfectly satisfied with attempting to do all the good in their power in their native land, there are others of a more enterprising character, inflamed with the holy ambition of carrying the glad tidings beyond the bounds of Christendom; like the great apostle of the Gentiles, who was determined not to build on another man's foundation, but if possible to preach Christ in regions where his name was not known. The circumstances which contribute to such a resolution are various, often too subtle and complicated to admit of a distinct analysis: a constitutional ardour of mind, a natural neglect of difficulties and dangers, an impatience of being confined within the trammels of ordinary duties, together with many accidental associations and impressions, may combine to form a missionary spirit; nor is it so necessary minutely to investigate the causes which have led to a given determination, as the legitimacy of the object, and the purity of the motive.

We adore the prolific Source of all good, in the variety and discrimination of his gifts, by which he imparts a separate character and allots a distinct sphere of operation to the general and essential principles which form the christian and the minister. *He gave some apostles, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

The sacred impulse to which we have adverted, I am certain you have felt in no common degree, and that it has been your ardent wish to be employed as a messenger to the heathen, from the time you devoted yourself to the ministry. Of your possessing this most essential prerequisite for the office you have undertaken, it is impossible for those who know you to entertain a doubt.

The next qualification of whose necessity I must be allowed to remind you, is singular *self-devotement*, without a degree of which it is not possible to be a christian, still less to any useful purpose a minister, least of all a

missionary. In resolving to quit your native country, and to relinquish your nearest connexions, with little expectation of beholding them again in the flesh, you have given decisive indications of this spirit: nor to a mind like yours, exquisitely alive to the sensibilities of nature and friendship, can the sacrifice you have already made be deemed inconsiderable. But as it is still impossible for you to conjecture the extent of the privations and trials to which, in the pursuit of your object, you may be exposed, your situation is not unlike that of Abraham, who, being commanded to leave his own country, and his father's house, went out not knowing whither he went. As you are entering on an untried scene, where difficulties may arise to exercise your patience and fortitude, of which you can form but a very inadequate conception, you will do well to contemplate the example, and meditate the words of St. Paul, in circumstances not very dissimilar: *And now I go up bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there, save that in every city the Holy Ghost witnesseth that bonds and affliction await me: but none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord to fulfil it.* The love of ease, or the indulgence of secular ambition, would be fatal to the object you are pursuing; nor, in your situation, is there any thing so much to be dreaded as a divided heart, a spirit which hesitates betwixt the calls of duty and the attractions of the world. *To arm yourself with the same mind that was in Christ, who himself suffered, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps*, is a most indispensable part of your duty. In proportion as you feel yourself a stranger upon the earth, eagerly attached to none of its enjoyments or pursuits, prepared without repining to relinquish whatever Providence may demand, and suffer whatever it may inflict; in a word, in proportion to the degree in which you abandon all right in yourself, will you be qualified for the work of an evangelist. Purged from earthly concretions, and worldly passions, you will become *a vessel of honour fitted for the Master's use.* He who is not pos-

sessed of a considerable portion of a self-denying spirit, which was eminently the spirit of him *who pleased not himself*, can engage in no employment more irksome and intolerable than that of a Missionary; for what pleasure can he expect, what advantage can he hope to reap, independent of the consciousness or the hope of doing good? By the nature of your undertaking, all the avenues to secular reputation and emolument are shut against you; on the brilliant illusions with which the children of this world are enchanted, you have closed your eyes, and nothing is left but the severe and sublime satisfaction of following in the steps of those apostles and prophets, who in the midst of the derision of the world, exhausted themselves in a series of efforts to enlighten and to save it. You have chosen, it is true, the better part; but it is a part which you must not hope to sustain but by the perfect subjection and mortification of every rival passion. You must be content to derive your satisfaction from yourself, or rather from your consciousness of the Divine approbation, since you will meet with few disposed to sympathize in your sorrows or rejoice in your success.

The next qualification necessary for a teacher of christianity among heathens, is the *spirit of faith*, by which I intend, not merely that cordial belief of the truth which is essential to a christian, but that unshaken persuasion of the promises of God respecting the triumph and enlargement of his kingdom, which is sufficient to denominate its possessor *strong in faith*. It is impossible that the mind of a Missionary should be too much impressed with the beauty, glory, and grandeur of the kingdom of Christ, as it is unfolded in the oracles of the Old and New Testament; or with the certainty of the final accomplishment of those oracles, founded on the faithfulness and omnipotence of their Author. To those parts of scripture his attention should be especially directed, in which the Holy Ghost employs and exhausts, so to speak, the whole force and splendour of inspiration in depicting the future reign of the Messiah, together with that astonishing spectacle of dignity, purity, and peace which his church will exhibit, when, *having the glory of God*, her

bounds shall be commensurate with those of the habitable globe; when every object on which the eye shall rest, will remind the spectator of the commencement of a new age, in which the tabernacle of God is with men, and he dwells amongst them. His spirit should be imbued with that sweet and tender awe which such anticipations will infallibly produce, whence will spring a generous contempt of the world, and an ardour bordering on impatience to be employed, though in the humblest sphere, as the instrument of accelerating such a period. For compared to this destiny in reserve for the children of men, compared to this glory, invisible at present, and hid behind the clouds which envelope this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has hitherto shone upon the world, is midnight, and the highest splendours that have invested it, the shadow of death.

Independent of these assurances, the idea of converting pagan nations to the christian faith must appear chimerical. The attempt to persuade them to relinquish their ancient mode of thinking, corroborated by habit, by example, by interest, and to adopt a new system of opinions and feelings, and enter on a new course of life, will ever be deemed by the worldly-wise, impracticable and visionary. *Pass over the isles of Chittim and see*, said the Lord, by the mouth of Jeremiah, *and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods?* For a nation to *change* their gods, is represented by the highest authority as an event almost unparalleled: and if it be so difficult to induce them to change the *mode* of their idolatry, how much more to persuade them to abandon it altogether! Idolatry is not to be looked upon as a mere speculative error respecting the object of worship, of little or no practical efficacy. Its hold upon the mind of a fallen creature is most tenacious, its operation most extensive. It is a corrupt practical institution, involving a whole system of sentiments and manners which perfectly moulds and transforms its votaries. It modifies human nature, in every aspect under which it can be contemplated, being intimately blended and incorporated

with all its perceptions of good and evil, with all its infirmities, passions, and fears. In a country like India, where it has been established for ages, its ramifications are so extended as to come into contact with every mode, and every incident of life. Scarce a day, or an hour, passes with an Hindoo, in which, by the abstinencies it enjoins, and the ceremonies it prescribes, he is not reminded of his religion. It meets him at every turn, presses like the atmosphere on all sides, and holds him by a thousand invisible chains. By incessantly admonishing him of something which he must do, or something which he must forbear, it becomes the strongest of his active habits; while the multiplicity of objects of worship, distinguished by an infinite variety in their character and exploits, is sufficient to fill the whole sphere of his imagination. In the indolent repose which his constitution and climate incline him to indulge, he suffers his fancy to wander, without limit, amidst scenes of voluptuous enjoyment, or objects of terror and dismay; while, revolving the history of his gods, he conceives himself absorbed in holy contemplations. There is not a vicious passion he can be disposed to cherish, not a crime he can be tempted to commit, for which he may not find a sanction and an example in the legends of his gods. Though the system of polytheism established in India, considered in an argumentative light, is beneath contempt, being destitute of the least shadow of proof, as well as of all coherence in its principles; yet, viewed as an instrument of establishing a despotic empire over the mind, nothing, it must be acknowledged, was ever more artfully contrived; not to mention the distinction of castes which is obviously adapted to fix and perpetuate every other institution. That the true religion should degenerate into idolatry is easily to be accounted for from the known principles of human nature, because such deterioration is aided by its corruption, flatters its strongest propensities, and artfully adapts itself to whatever is feeble, sensitive, and voluptuous in the character of the species.

..... Facilis descensus Averni.

As it is easy to descend from an elevation which it is difficult to climb, to fall from the adoration of the Supreme Being to the worship of idols, demands no effort. Idolatry is strongly intrenched in the corruptions, and fortified by the weakness, of human nature. Hence we find all nations have sunk into it in succession, frequently in opposition to the strongest remonstrances of inspired prophets; while we have no example in the history of the world, of a single city, family, or individual, who has renounced it through the mere operation of unassisted reason: such is the fatal propensity of mankind to that enormity. It is the veil of the covering, cast over all flesh, which nothing but the effulgence of Revelation has pierced. The true religion satisfies and enlarges the reason, but militates against the inclinations of men. Resting on a few sublime truths, addressed to the understanding and conscience, affording few distinct images to the fancy, and no indulgence to the passions, it can only be planted and preserved by a continual efflux from its Divine Author, of whose spirituality and elevation it so largely partakes.

But however difficult it may be to prevail upon men to relinquish the practice of idolatry, the accomplishment of this is not the whole, perhaps not the most arduous part of your work, since you are too well acquainted with the genius of Christianity to permit yourself to rest satisfied with any external profession, which is destitute of the fruits of the Spirit. The change you wish to realize, and which you will alone contemplate with satisfaction, is the effectual conversion of the soul from sin to holiness, and from the world to God; and how much the necessity of this increases the difficulty of propagating the gospel among heathens with success, is so obvious that I need not insist upon it at large. The valley of vision in Ezekiel, filled with bones which are very dry, is no exaggerated picture of the state of the heathen world; and what less than an Almighty power can clothe them with sinews, cover them with flesh and breathe into them the breath of life?

Hence the absolute necessity of a vigorous faith in the

promises of God, respecting the future renovation of mankind, which will support you amidst the greatest discouragements, prompt you to hope against hope, and inspire you with unshaken perseverance and resolution; besides that, on account of the glory it gives to God, it imparts by divine appointment to its possessor, an interest in his all-sufficiency and power. It is a mysterious link in the chain of moral causes and effects which connects the weakness of the creature with the almightiness of God. *Be it unto thee*, said our Lord on a certain occasion, *be it unto thee according to thy faith.* Faith, considered as a mere speculative assent to the truth of a divine testimony, may be looked upon as uniform or stationary; but when we consider it as a practical principle, as one of the graces of the Spirit, we perceive it to be, in common with others, susceptible of continual enlargement and increase. In the degree of power which future and invisible realities exert over the mind, in the practical energy of what men profess to believe, in the promptitude and certainty with which it determines them to a correspondent conduct, there is the utmost diversity even among those who believe with the heart. The faith to which the Scriptures attach such momentous consequences, and ascribe such glorious exploits, is a practical habit, which, like every other, is strengthened and increased by continual exercise. It is nourished by meditation, by prayer, and the devout perusal of the Scriptures; and the light which it diffuses becomes stronger and clearer by an unintercepted converse with its object, and a faithful compliance with its dictates; as on the contrary it is weakened and obscured by whatever wounds the conscience, or impairs the purity and spirituality of the mind. This is the shield which will cover you from every assault; the chief part of that defensive armour which it behoves you to put on. Reposing on the word of Him with whom all things are possible, of Him who cannot lie; in the formidable bulwarks of idolatry, in the invincible rampart of prejudice and superstition, which the great adversary of mankind has cast up to obstruct the progress of truth, you will see nothing

to appal you: you will feel the battle not to be yours, but the Lord's, who, determined to subdue his enemies under his feet, condescends to employ you as an humble instrument of his victories; and instead of sinking under the consciousness of weakness, you will glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

Allow me to remind you of the absolute necessity of cultivating a mild, conciliating, affectionate temper, in the discharge of your office. If an uninterested spectator, after a careful perusal of the New Testament, were asked what he conceived to be its distinguishing characteristic, he would reply, without hesitation, that wonderful spirit of philanthropy by which it is distinguished. It is a perpetual commentary on that sublime aphorism, *God is love.* As the christian religion is an exhibition of the incomprehensible mercy of God to a guilty race, so it is dispensed in a manner perfectly congenial with its nature; and the book which contains it is replete with such unaffected strokes of tenderness and goodness, as are to be found in no other volume. The benign spirit of the gospel infused itself into the breast of its first Missionaries. In St. Paul for example, we behold the most heroic resolution, the most lofty superiority to all the modes of intimidation and danger, a spirit which rose with its difficulties, and exulted in the midst of the most dismaying objects; yet when we look more narrowly into his character, and investigate his motives, we perceive it was his attachment to mankind that inspired him with this intrepidity, and urged him to conflicts more painful and arduous than the votaries of glory have ever sustained. Who would have supposed it possible for the same breast to be the seat of so much energy and so much softness? that he who changed the face of the world by his preaching, and while a prisoner made his judge tremble on the tribunal, could stoop to embrace a fugitive slave, and to employ the most exquisite address to effect his reconciliation with his master? The conversion of Onesimus afforded him a joy *like the joy of harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* When the spiritual interests of mankind were concerned.

no difficulties so formidable as to shake his resolution, no details so insignificant as to escape his notice. To the utmost inflexibility of principle, he joined the gentlest condescension to human infirmity, *becoming all things to all men, that he might win some: to the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, to them that were without law, as without law*, adapting on all occasions his modes of address to the character and disposition of those with whom he conversed. It was the love of Christ and of souls that produced and harmonized those apparent discordances.

Such is the example you must propose for your imitation, if you would realize to any considerable extent the object of your mission to the heathen. By a mild and unassuming deportment, by an attention to their worldly, as well as to their spiritual, interests; by adopting, as far as you have ability, whatever may contribute to their happiness and improvement, convince them that you are the friend of man. When you have established yourself in their affections, you have gained an important point; you have possessed yourself of a signal advantage for the successful prosecution of your work.

Your business is to persuade men, and how can you expect to succeed unless you conciliate their regard? which is more necessary on account of the seeming severity which attaches to some part of the doctrine of Christ. Were you permitted to inculcate a self-pleasing doctrine, the want of suavity and gentleness of manner might easily be dispensed with; the laxity of the precept would compensate for the austerity of the teacher. But when you are called on to insist on the state of man as a fallen and guilty creature, to enforce the necessity of self-denial, to impose the most powerful restraints on the indulgence of criminal passions; when you must denounce the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, great mildness and affection are requisite to prevent such representations from exciting disgust. What is awful and alarming in christianity, should be softened and tempered by a persuasive tenderness of address. Let it be your care to divest religion of whatever is unlovely and repulsive, that it may appear not only pure, but gentle; not only majestic but amiable; equally favourable to the enjoyment and the communication of happiness. But I have dwelt longer on this head than was necessary, when I recollect that the person I am addressing is distinguished by a temper which will render the mild condescensions I am recommending not more his duty than his delight.

The affectionate and conciliatory disposition we have been enforcing must be combined with prudence, and the diligent study of human nature, which you will find absolutely necessary to conduct you through intricate and unbeaten paths. St. Paul frequently reminds the Thessalonians of the *manner of his entrance* amongst them. In the first introduction of the gospel amongst a people, it is of great importance that every step be well weighed, that nothing be done which is rash, offensive, or indecorous; but every precaution employed, consistent with godly simplicity, to disarm prejudice, and conciliate respect: nor is there any thing in the conduct of the first ministers of the gospel more to be admired than the exquisite propriety with which they conducted themselves in the most delicate situations. Their zeal was exempt from indecorum, their caution from timidity or art. In the commencement of every great and hazardous undertaking, the first measures are usually decisive, at least in those instances in which success is dependent, under God, on the voluntary co-operation of mankind. A single act of imprudence is sufficient to blast the undertaking of a Missionary, which in the situation of an ordinary minister, would scarcely be felt. The best method of securing yourself from errors in this quarter, is to endeavour to acquire as large a measure as possible of the graces of the Spirit, to be deeply imbued with the wisdom which is from above. Nothing subtle or refined should enter into the views of a christian Missionary. Let him be continually elevating his principles, and purifying his motives; let him be clothed with humility, and actuated on all occasions with love to God and the souls of men, and his character cannot fail of being marked

with a propriety and beauty which will ultimately command universal esteem. These were the only arts which a Schwartz in the east, and a Brainerd in the west, condescended to cultivate.

It must be remembered, however, that the functions of a Missionary connect him more with mankind than ordinary ministers, and less admit of an entire abstraction from the world; on which account he will sometimes be exposed to difficulties from which nothing can extricate him but a considerable acquaintance with men and things. He will probably be called to transact affairs of considerable moment with persons of superior stations, with men of dissimilar characters and habits, of different nations and religions, who possess nothing in common but the epidemic selfishness of human nature; in an intercourse with whom, he will need the wisdom of the serpent, combined with the innocence of the dove. The prudence, however, which it is desirable a missionary should possess, is not a timid, calculating policy; it is manly and heroic, operating with promptitude and vigour on an extensive fund of knowledge acquired by habits of acute and vigilant observation. Of many functions of life it is possible to foresee the duties they comprise, and to ascertain beforehand the extent of their demand on our time and talents. In the office of a Missionary it is impossible. His engagements must be in a great degree fortuitous, arising out of circumstances which he could neither foresee nor control; and hence, unless he possess a prompt and enlightened judgement, he will often feel himself embarrassed and perplexed.

There is much in the situation of a Missionary calculated to keep him awake and attentive to his duties. To a stated pastor, it is confessed, there are not wanting powerful motives to diligence and exertion, at the same time that it is equally obvious there are considerable temptations to indolence and formality. Since the services he is engaged to perform admit of little variety, and are easily reducible to a system, they are in no small danger of being performed rather from the mechanism of

habit than the impulse of feeling; and much ardour of mind is requisite to infuse freshness and novelty into a series of operations so uniform. In the performance of duties which proceed in a settled routine, it is equally difficult to feel and to impart an interest. With the Missionary it is quite the reverse. Incapable, as he is, of forming a conception of the situation in which he may be placed, or of the difficulties with which he may be surrounded, he must be conscious his undertaking involves a character of enterprise and hazard. He is required to explore new paths, and, leaving the footsteps of the flock, to go in quest of the lost sheep, on whatever mountain it may have wandered, or in whatever valley it may be hid. He must be prepared to encounter prejudice and error in strange and unwonted shapes, to trace the aberrations of reason, and the deviations from rectitude, through all the diversified mazes of superstition and idolatry. He is engaged in a series of offensive operations; he is in the field of battle, wielding *weapons which are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down the strong holds of Satan.* When not in action, he is yet encamped in an enemy's country, where nothing can secure his acquisitions, or preserve him from surprise, but incessant vigilance. The voluntary exile from his native country to which he submits, is sufficient to remind him continually of his important embassy, and to induce a solicitude that so many sacrifices may not be made, so many privations undergone in vain. He holds the lamp of instruction to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; and while there remains a particle of ignorance not expelled, a single prejudice not vanquished, a sinful or idolatrous custom not relinquished, his task is left unfinished. It is not enough for him, on a stated day, to address an audience on the concerns of eternity: he must teach from house to house, and be instant in season and out of season, embracing every opportunity which offers of inculcating the principles of a new religion, as well as of *confirming the souls of his disciples.* He must consider himself as the mouth, and interpreter of that wisdom, *which crieth without, which*

uttereth her voice in the streets, which crieth in the chief places of concourse.

Under these impressions, you will peruse the Acts of the Apostles, which record the methods by which the gospel was first propagated, with deep attention, where you will trace precedents the most instructive, as well as difficulties surmounted and trials endured, exactly similar to your own; nor will you fail to feel a sympathy of spirit with those holy men in their labours and sufferings, which other ministers can but very imperfectly possess. Encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses, you will esteem it no inconsiderable honour to share in the same combat, encounter the same enemies, and accomplish the share allotted you of those sufferings which remain to Christ's mystical body. I scarcely need recommend to your attention the letters of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, where the office of an evangelist (for such you must consider yourself) is delineated with such precision and fidelity. While you peruse his inspired directions, you are entitled to consider yourself as addressed, inasmuch as the Spirit under whose direction they were written, unquestionably intended them for the instruction of all who are in similar circumstances.

In directing your view to apostolical precedents, attend not so much to their *letter* as to their *spirit:* investigate carefully the circumstances in which they were placed; compare them with your own with respect to the particulars in which they coincide, and in which they differ, that you may follow them, not as a servile copyist, but as a judicious and enlightened imitator.

Be *strong* in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus. Among the nations which will be the scene of your future labours, you will witness a state of things essentially different from that which prevails here, where the name of Christ is held in reverence, the principal doctrines of his religion speculatively acknowledged, and the institutes of worship widely extended and diffused. The leaven of christian piety has spread itself in innumerable directions, modified public opinion, improved the state of society, and given birth to many admirable

institutions unknown to pagan countries. The authority of the Saviour is recognised, his injunctions in some instances obeyed, and the outrages of impiety restrained by law, by custom, and above all, by the silent counteraction of piety in its sincere professors. Hence, in combating the vices and irreligion of the age, so many principles are conceded, and so much ground already won from the adversary, that little remains but to urge him with the legitimate consequences of his own opinions, and to rouse the dormant energies of conscience by the exhibition of acknowledged truth. Ministers of the gospel in this quarter of the globe resemble the commanders of an army stationed in a conquered country, whose inhabitants, overawed and subdued, yield a partial obedience; they have sufficient employment in attempting to conciliate the affections of the natives, and in carrying into execution the orders and regulations of their Prince; since there is much latent disaffection, though no open rebellion, a strong partiality to their former rulers, with few attempts to erect the standard of revolt.

In India, Satan maintains an almost undisputed empire, and the powers of darkness, secure of their dominion, riot and revel at their pleasure, sporting themselves with the misery of their vassals, whom they incessantly agitate with delusive hopes and fantastic terrors, leading them captive at their will, while few efforts have been made to despoil them of their usurped authority. Partial invasions have been attempted, and a few captives disenthralled; but the strength and sinews of empire remain entire, and that dense and palpable darkness which invests it has scarcely felt the impression of a few feeble and scattered rays. In India you will witness the predominance of a system which provides for the worship of gods many, and lords many, while it excludes the adoration of the Supreme Being, legitimates cruelty, polygamy, and lust, debases the standard of morals, oppresses with ceremonies those whom it deprives of instruction, and suggests no solid hopes of happiness beyond the grave.

You will witness with indignation that monstrous alliance betwixt impurity and devotion, obscenity and religion, which characterises the popular idolatry of all nations, and which, in opposition to the palliating sophistry of infidels, sufficiently evinces it to be what the Scriptures assert—the worship of devils, not of God.

When we consider that moral causes operate on free agents, we shall not be surprised to find their effects are less uniform than those which result from the action of material and physical powers, and that human minds are susceptible of opposite impressions from the same objects.

On such as have neither been established in the evidences, nor felt the efficacy of revealed religion, a residence in a pagan country has usually a most pernicious effect, and matures latent irreligion into open impiety. The absence of christian institutions and christian examples leaves them at liberty to gratify their sensual inclinations without control, and the familiar contemplation of pagan manners and customs gradually wears out every trace and vestige of the religion in which they were educated, and imboldens them to consider it in the light of a local superstition. They are no further converts to the brahminical faith than to prefer it to their own; that is, they prefer the religion they can despise with impunity, to one that afflicts their consciences, that which leaves them free, to that which restrains them. As the secret language of their heart had always been, *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from amongst us*, in the absence of God, of his institutes and his worship, they find a congenial element, nor are they at all displeased at perceiving the void filled with innumerable fantastic shapes and chimeras; for they contemplate religion with great composure, providing it be sufficiently ridiculous.

You, I am persuaded, will view the condition of millions who are involved in the shades of idolatry, originally formed in the image of God, now totally estranged from their great Parent, and reposing their trust on things which cannot profit, with different emotions, and will be anxious to recall them to the Bishop and Shepherd of their souls. Instead of considering the most detestable species of idolatry as so many different modes of worshipping the One Supreme, agreeable to the jargon of infidels, you will not hesitate to regard them as an impious attempt to share his incommunicable honours; as composing that image of jealousy which he is engaged to smite, confound, and destroy. When you compare the incoherence, extravagance, and absurdity which pervade the systems of polytheism, with the simple and sublime truths of the gospel, the result will be an increased attachment to that mystery of godliness. When you observe the anxiety of the Hindoo devotee to obtain the pardon of sin, and the incredible labours and sufferings which he cheerfully undergoes to quiet the perturbations of conscience, the doctrine of the cross will rise, if possible, still higher in your esteem, and you will long for an opportunity of crying in his ears, *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.* When you witness the immolation of females on the funeral pile of their husbands, and the barbarous treatment of aged parents, left by their children to perish on the banks of the Ganges, you will recognise the footsteps of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and will be impatient to communicate the mild and benevolent maxims of the gospel. When you behold an immense population held in chains by that detestable institution the *caste*, as well as bowed down under an intolerable weight of brahminical superstitions, you will long to impart the liberty which Christ confers, *where there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*

The cultivation of a wilderness, however, requires a more robust and vigorous industry than is necessary to preserve in a good condition the ground which is already reclaimed. The noxious produce of a long tract of time must be extirpated, the stubborn and intractable soil broken up, marshes drained, irregularities levelled, and much persevering labour employed, ere the ordinary operations of agriculture can commence, or the seed be cast into the earth. In attempting to evangelize the inhabitants of pagan countries, you must expect to

encounter peculiar difficulties; you will meet in the natives with the ignorance and mental imbecility of children, without the candour, simplicity, and freedom from prejudice which are among the charms of that tender age. To efface erroneous impressions, to eradicate false principles, and reduce them even to a natural state, defective and corrupt as that state is, will be no inconsiderable task, since there is not only an immense void to be filled, and great deficiencies to be supplied, but principles and prejudices to contend with, capable of the most active resistance.

In recommending the principles of christianity to a pagan nation, I would by no means advise the adoption of a refined and circuitous course of instruction, commencing with an argumentative exposition of the principles of natural religion, and from thence advancing to the peculiar doctrines of revelation; nor would I advise you to devote much time to an elaborate confutation of the Hindoo or Mahometan systems. The former of these methods would be far too subtle and intricate for popular use; the latter calculated to irritate. Great practical effects on the populace are never produced by profound argumentation; and every thing which tends to irritation and disgust should be carefully avoided. Let your instruction be in the form of a *testimony:* let it, with respect to the mode of exhibiting it, though not to the spirit of the teacher, be *dogmatic. Testify* repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It might become a Socrates, who was left to the light of nature, to express himself with diffidence, and to affirm that he had spared no pains in acting up to the character of a philosopher, in other words, a diligent inquirer after truth: but whether he had philosophized aright, or attained the object of his inquiries, he knew not, but left it to be ascertained in that world on which he was entering. In him, such indications of modest distrust were graceful and affecting: but would little become the disciple of revelation, or the christian minister, who is entitled to say with St. John, *we* know *that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and that the Son*

of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.

After reminding them of their state as guilty and polluted creatures, which the ceremonies of their religion teach them to confess, exhibit to the inhabitants of Hindostan the cross of Christ as their only refuge. Acquaint them with his incarnation, his character as the Son of God and the Son of man, his offices, and the design of his appearance; not with the air of a disputer of this world, but of him who is conscious to himself of his possessing the medicine of life, the treasure of immortality, which he is anxious to impart to guilty men. Insist fearlessly on the futility and vanity of all human methods of expiation, on the impotence of idols, and the command of God to *all men every where to repent, inasmuch as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.* Display the sufferings of Christ like one who was an eye witness of those sufferings, and hold up the blood, the precious blood of atonement, as issuing warm from the cross. It is a peculiar excellence of the gospel, that in its wonderful adaptation to the state and condition of mankind, as fallen creatures, it bears intrinsic marks of its divinity, and is supported not less by internal than by external evidence. By a powerful appeal to the conscience, by a faithful delineation of man in his grandeur, and in his weakness, in his original capacity for happiness, and his present misery and guilt, present this branch of its evidence in all its force. Seize on every occasion those features of christianity which render it interesting; and by awakening the fears, and exciting the hopes, of your hearers, endeavour to annihilate every other object, and make it appear, what it really is, the pearl of great price, the sovereign balm, the cure of every ill, the antidote of death, the precursor of immortality. In such a ministry, fear not to give loose to all the ardour of your soul, to call into action every emotion and every faculty which can exalt or adorn it. You will find ample scope for all its force and tenderness; and should you be

called to pour your life as a libation on the offering of the Gentiles, you will only have the more occasion to exult and rejoice.

In order to qualify yourself for the performance of these duties, it is above all things necessary for you to acquaint yourself with the general doctrines of christianity in their full extent; but it will be neither necessary nor expedient to initiate your converts into those controversies which, through a long course of time, have grown up amongst christians. Endeavour to acquire as extensive and perfect a knowledge as possible of the dictates of inspiration, and by establishing your hearers in these, preclude the entrance of error, rather than confute it. Be always prepared to answer every modest inquiry into the grounds of your faith and practice; and that you may be more capable of entering into their difficulties, and anticipating their objections, place yourself as much as possible in the situation of those whom you are called to instruct. When we consider the permanent consequences likely to result from first impressions on the minds of pagans, the few advantages they possess for religious discussion, and the extreme confidence they are likely to repose in their spiritual guides, you must be conscious how important it is to *plant wholly a right seed.* Your defective representations of truth will not soon be supplied, nor the errors you plant extirpated, since we find societies of christians in these parts of the world, where discussion and controversy abound, retain from generation to generation the distinguishing tenets of their leaders. In forming the plan, and laying the foundation of an edifice which it is proposed shall last for ever, it is desirable that no materials should be admitted but such as are solid and durable, and no ornaments introduced but such as are chaste and noble. As it would be too much to expect you should perfectly succeed in imparting the mind of Christ, might I be permitted to advise, you will lean rather to the side of *defect* than *excess*, and in points of inferior magnitude omit what is true, rather than inculcate what

is doubtful, since the influence of religion on the heart depends not on the multiplicity, but on the quality of its objects.

The unnecessary multiplication of articles of faith gives a character of littleness to christianity, and tends in no small degree to impress a similar character on its professors. The grandeur and efficacy of the gospel results not from an immense accumulation of little things, but from its powerful exhibition of a few great ones. If you are determined to initiate your hearers into the subtleties and disputes which have prevailed in the Western world, I would recommend you, in imitation of the church of Rome, to dispense with the New Testament as the basis of instruction, and to betake yourself to the writings of the schoolmen; for that divine volume, rightly interpreted, supplies no aliment to a disputatious humour, which has never ceased, since it was first introduced, to be the scoff of infidels, and the plague of the church.

Among the indirect benefits which may be expected to arise from missions, we may be allowed to anticipate a more pure, simple, apostolical mode of presenting the gospel, which it may be doubted whether any of the various denominations, under which the followers of Christ have been classed, have exhibited precisely as he and his apostles taught it. In consequence of the collision of disputes, and the hostile aspect which rival sects bear to each other, they are scarcely in a situation to investigate truth with perfect impartiality. Few or none of them have derived their sentiments purely from the sacred oracles, as the result of independent inquiry; but almost universally from some distinguished leader, who at the commencement of the Reformation formed his faith, and planned his discipline, amidst the heat and fury of theological combat. Terms have been invented for the purpose of excluding error, or more accurately defining the truth, to which the New Testament is a stranger, and on those terms associations and impressions ingrafted, which in some instances, perhaps, little correspond with the divine simplicity of the gospel. It is far from my intention to insinuate that serious and fundamental

errors may justly be imputed to the classes of christians to whom I refer; I am fully convinced of the contrary:—but it may be worth while to inquire whether we have not all in our turn receded somewhat from the standard, if not by the adoption of positive error, yet by a disproportionate attention to some parts of revelation, to the neglect of others equally important, in consequence of an undue partiality to our respective peculiarities.

The situation of a Missionary retired from the scene of debate and controversy, who has continually before his eyes the objects which presented themselves to the attention of the apostles, is favourable to an emancipation from prejudice of every sort, and to the acquisition of just and enlarged conceptions of christianity. It will be your lot to walk the same wards in this great hospital, and to prescribe to the same class of patients that first experienced the salutary and renovating power of the gospel. The gods which are worshipped at this time in India are supposed by Sir William Jones to be the very same, under different names, with those who shared the adoration of Italy and Greece when the gospel was first published in those regions; so that you will be an eye-witness of the very evils and enormities which then prevailed in the Western hemisphere, and which the sword of the Spirit so effectually subdued. You will be under great advantages for ascending to first principles, for tracing the stream to its head and spring, by having incessantly to contemplate the state of things in a moral view, of which every page of scripture assumes the existence, but of which the inhabitants of Europe have no living experience. It is with great satisfaction accordingly I have observed the harmony of doctrine, the identity of instruction, which has pervaded the ministry of protestant missionaries, who have been employed under the auspices of different denominations of christians.

If to survey mankind in different situations, and under the influence of opposite institutions, civil and religious, tends to elevate the mind above vulgar prejudice, by none is this advantage more eminently possessed than by christian missionaries. In addition to the advantages usually

anticipated from foreign travel, their attention is directly turned to man in the most interesting light in which he can be viewed. An intelligent missionary, in consequence of daily conversing with the natives on the most momentous subjects, and at the most affecting moments, has opportunities of becoming acquainted, not merely with the surface of manners, but with the interior of the character, which can rarely fall to the lot of any other person; besides, that christianity, it may be justly affirmed, is the best decipherer of the human heart, and is that alone which can solve its contradictions and explain its anomalies. Hence it may be fairly expected, nor will the expectation disappoint us, that an experienced Missionary, possessed of the talent and habit of observation, will, in every country, deserve to be classed amongst the most enlightened of its inhabitants.

Few things more powerfully tend to enlarge the mind than conversing with great objects, and engaging in great pursuits. That the object you are pursuing is entitled to that appellation, will not be questioned by him who reflects on the infinite advantages derived from christianity, to every nation and clime where it has prevailed in its purity, and that the prodigious superiority which Europe possesses over Asia and Africa, is chiefly to be ascribed to this cause. It is the possession of religion which comprehends the seeds of endless improvement, which maintains an incessant struggle with whatever is barbarous, selfish, or inhuman, which, by unveiling futurity, clothes morality with the sanction of a divine law, and harmonizes utility and virtue in every combination of events, and in every stage of existence; a religion which, by affording the most just and sublime conceptions of the Deity, and of the moral relations of man, has given birth at once to the loftiest speculation, and the most child-like humanity, uniting the inhabitants of the globe into one family, and in the bonds of a common salvation; it is this religion which, rising upon us like a finer sun, has quickened moral vegetation, and replenished Europe with talents, virtues, and exploits, which, in spite of its physical disadvantages, have rendered it a

paradise, the delight and wonder of the world. An attempt to propagate this religion among the natives of Hindostan, may perhaps be stigmatized as visionary and romantic; but to enter the lists of controversy with those who would deny it to be great and noble, would be a degradation to reason.*

On these principles the cause of missions has recently been sustained in parliament, and the propriety and expedience of attempting the propagation of christianity in India, demonstrated by arguments and considerations suited to the meridian of such assemblies. We feel ourselves highly indebted to those distinguished senators who exerted their eloquence on that occasion, and have no hesitation in asserting that a more wise and magnanimous measure was never adopted by an enlightened legislature, than that of facilitating the communication of

* It is impossible to read the strictures of the Edinburgh Review on Missions, in an article which appeared under that title, without surprise and indignation, that such sentiments could find admission in a work which possesses such just claims to literary merit. The anonymous writer of the article alluded to, with the levity of a buffoon, joined to a heart of iron, and a face of brass, has more than insinuated that the christianity attempted to be promoted in India by the Missionaries at Serampore, would, were it adopted, prove a serious injury to the natives, and that they are much happier and more virtuous under their present institutions. The system of religion, be it remembered, which these men have attempted to introduce, and which this *christian* reviewer loads with abuse, is precisely the same in its doctrinal articles with that of the Church of England, to which he has subscribed, *ex animo* no doubt, his unfeigned assent and consent. It may be hoped, that at a time when the Church of England is evincing a spirit of moderation and forbearance, and can boast of so many prelates and dignitaries, distinguished for their piety and learning, no clergyman for the future will be allowed to degrade himself in a similar manner, without the most indignant rebuke. It may possibly gratify certain spirits to see the dissenters and methodists vilified and abused; but they will do well to remember, that the indulgence of a profane and scoffing humour must be ultimately injurious, not only to christianity, but to any christian community whatever; and that to stab religion through the sides of fanaticism, is a stale artifice of infidels, by which the simplest can no longer be deceived. I sincerely hope the conductors of the Edinburgh Review have long been ashamed of the article in question. When I compare the intellectual power displayed in some articles of that publication with the extreme ignorance of religion evinced in others, I know not how better to characterise it than in the language of Virgil, speaking of Polyphemus,—

"Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, *cui lumen ademptum.*"

christian knowledge to the subjects of our Eastern empire. As a political measure, nothing more unexceptionable or beneficial can be conceived. It is not in this light, however, we would wish you to regard your present undertaking. What may satisfy the views of a statesman, ought not to satisfy a christian minister. It is the business of the former to project for this world; of the latter, for eternity. The former proposes to improve the advantages, and to mitigate the evils of life; the latter, the conquest of death, and the achievement of immortality. They proceed in the same direction, it is true, as far as they go; but the one proceeds infinitely further than the other.

In the views of the most enlightened statesmen, compared to those of a christian minister, there is a littleness and limitation, which is not to be imputed in one case as a moral imperfection, nor in the other as a personal merit; the difference arising purely from the disparity in the subjects upon which they respectively speculate. Should you be asked on your arrival in India, as it is very probable you will, what there is in christianity which renders it so inestimable in your eyes, that you judged it fit to undertake so long, dangerous, and expensive a voyage, for the purpose of imparting it,—you will answer without hesitation, it is the power of God to salvation; nor will any view of it short of this, or the inculcation of it for any inferior purpose, enable it to produce even those moralizing and civilizing effects it is so powerfully adapted to accomplish. Christianity will civilize, it is true, but it is only when it is allowed to develope the energies by which it sanctifies. Christianity will inconceivably ameliorate the present condition of being,—who doubts it? Its universal prevalence, not in the name but in reality, will convert this world into a semi-paradisaical state; but it is only while it is permitted to prepare its inhabitants for a better. Let her be urged to forget her celestial origin and destiny, to forget that *she came from God, and returns to God;* and whether she is employed by the artful and enterprising, as the instrument of establishing a spiritual empire and dominion

over mankind, or by the philanthropist, as the means of promoting their civilization and improvement, she resents the foul indignity, claps her wings, and takes her flight, leaving nothing but a base and sanctimonious hypocrisy in her room.

Preach it then, my dear brother, with a constant recollection that such is its character and aim. Preach it with a perpetual view to eternity, and with the simplicity and affection with which you would address your dearest friends, were they assembled round your dying bed. While others are ambitious to form the citizen of earth, be it yours to train him for heaven; to raise up the temple of God from among the ancient desolations; to contribute your part towards the formation and perfection of that eternal society, which will flourish in inviolable purity and order, when all human associations shall be dissolved, and the princes of this world shall come to nought. In the pursuit of these objects, let it be your ambition to tread in the footsteps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz; I may add, of your excellent relative, with whom we are happy in perceiving you to possess a congeniality of character, not less than an affinity of blood.

But should you succeed beyond your utmost hope, expect not to escape the ridicule of the ungodly, or the censure of the world: but be content to sustain that sort of reputation, and run that sort of career, invariably allotted to the christian Missionary; where, agreeable to the experience of St. Paul, obscurity and notoriety, admiration and scorn, sorrows and consolations, attachments the most tender and opposition the most violent, are interchangeably mingled.

But whatever be the sentiments of the world, respecting which you will indulge no excessive solicitude, your name will be precious in India, your memory dear to multitudes, who will reverence in you the instrument of their eternal salvation; and how much more satisfaction will accrue from the consciousness of this, than from the loudest human applause, your own reflections will determine. At that awful moment when you are called to bid a final adieu to the world, and to look into eternity;

when the hopes, fears, and agitations which sublunary objects shall have occasioned, will subside like a feverish dream, or a vision of the night, the certainty of belonging to the number of the saved will be the only consolation; and when to this is joined the conviction of having contributed to enlarge that number, your joy will be full. You will be conscious of having conferred a benefit on your fellow-creatures, you know not precisely what, but of such a nature that it will require all the illumination of eternity to measure its dimensions, and ascertain its value. Having followed Christ in the *regeneration*, in the preparatory labours accompanying the renovation of mankind, you will rise to an elevated station in a world where the scantiest portion is a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, and a conspicuous place will be assigned you in that unchanging firmament, where those who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

But it is time I should close this address, which has already been extended much further than was at first designed. On the necessity of maintaining an exemplary purity of conduct, little or nothing has been said, because such is our confidence in your character, that we deemed admonition of this kind superfluous. As you are, however, still in the body, and will be exposed to numerous temptations, you will feel the propriety of being jealous over yourself with a godly jealousy, and exerting a continual care and vigilance, lest, in the awful language of the apostle, *after preaching to others, you yourself should be a cast-away.* I need not remind you that the society under whose auspices you are proceeding to India, have on no occasion employed a Missionary in whom they reposed more confidence, or of whom they formed more raised expectations; if you should become vain, worldly, sensual, indolent, and consequently useless, ours will not be an ordinary disappointment; we shall have fallen from a great hope. You will be sensible of the indispensable necessity of not interfering with the politics of India, nor of giving the smallest ground of umbrage and distrust to the constituted authorities, to whom it will be your duty

not less than your interest to pay on all occasions, in return for the protection they will yield, the most respectful deference.

Let me also recommend you to listen to the advice, and be guided by the suggestions, as far as your conscience will permit, of your fathers in the mission, and of Dr. Carey in particular, whose wisdom and experience, to say nothing of his relationship to you, entitle him to reverential attention. You are now about to be removed from us, who it is probable shall see your face no more; but you will not be removed from the communion of saints, which no seas can divide, no distance impair, in which we shall often meet at a throne of grace, whence fervent prayers will ascend to the Father of mercies, that he may keep you under his holy protection, and cause the richest of his blessings to descend *on the head of him who was separate from his brethren.*

ARTICLES

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REVIEW

OF

FOSTER'S ESSAYS

Essays, in a Series of Letters, on the following Subjects:—On a Man's writing Memoirs of himself; On Decision of Character; On the application of the Epithet Romantic: On some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion has been rendered less acceptable to Persons of cultivated Taste. By JOHN FOSTER. 2 vols. 12mo. 1805. 1 vol. 8vo. pp. 458. Seventh Edition, 1823.

THE authors who have written on human nature may be properly distinguished into two classes, the metaphysical and the popular. The former contemplate man in the abstract; and, neglecting the different shades of character and peculiarities of temper by which mankind are diversified, confine their attention to those fundamental principles which pervade the whole species. In attempting to explore the secrets of mental organization, they assume nothing more for a basis than a mere susceptibility of impression, whence they labour to deduce the multiplied powers of the human mind. The light in which they choose to consider man in their researches, is not that of a being possessed already of the exercise of reason, and agitated by various sentiments and passions, but simply as capable of acquiring them; and their object is, by an accurate investigation of the laws which regulate the connexion of the mind with the external universe, to discover in what manner they are actually acquired. They endeavour to trace back every mental appearance to its source. Considering the powers and principles of the mind as a complicated piece of machinery, they attempt to discover the *primum mobile*, or in other words,

that primary law, that ultimate fact, which is sufficiently comprehensive to account for every other movement. This attention to the internal operations of the mind, with a view to analyse its principles, is one of the distinctions of modern times. Among the ancients, scarcely any thing of this sort was known. Comprehensive theories, and subtle disquisitions, are not unfrequent in their writings; but they are chiefly employed for the illustration of different modes of virtue, and the establishment of different ideas of the supreme good. Their most abstracted speculations had almost always a practical tendency. The schoolmen, indeed, were deeply immersed in metaphysical speculations. They fatigued their readers in the pursuit of endless abstractions and distinctions; but the design, even of these writers, seems rather to have been, accurately to arrange and define the objects of thought, than to explore the mental faculties themselves. The nature of particular and universal ideas, time, space, infinity, together with the mode of existence to be ascribed to the Supreme Being, chiefly engaged the attention of the mightiest minds in the middle ages. Acute in the highest degree, and endued with a wonderful patience of thinking, they yet, by a mistaken direction of their powers, wasted themselves in endless logomachies, and displayed more of a teazing subtlety than of philosophical depth. They chose rather to strike into the dark and intricate by-paths of metaphysical science, than to pursue a career of useful discovery: and as their disquisitions were neither adorned by taste, nor reared on a basis of extensive knowledge, they gradually fell into neglect, when juster views in philosophy made their appearance. Still, they will remain a mighty monument of the utmost which the mind of man can accomplish in the field of abstraction. If the metaphysician does not find in the schoolmen the materials of his work, he will perceive the study of their writings to be of excellent benefit in sharpening his tools. They will aid his acuteness, though they may fail to enlarge his knowledge.

When the inductive and experimental philosophy, recommended by Bacon, had, in the hands of Boyle and

Newton, led to such brilliant discoveries in the investigation of matter, an attempt was soon made to transfer the same method of proceeding to the mind. Hobbes, a man justly infamous for his impiety, but of extraordinary penetration, first set the example; which was not long after followed by Locke, who was more indebted to his predecessor than he had the candour to acknowledge. His celebrated Essay has been generally considered as the established code of metaphysics. The opinions and discoveries of this great man have since been enriched by large accessions, and, on some points, corrected and amended, by the labours of Berkeley, Hume, Reid, and a multitude of other writers. Still, there seems to be a principle of mortality inherent in metaphysical science, which, sooner or later, impairs the reputation of its most distinguished adepts. It is a circumstance worthy of remark, that there has never been a reputation of this kind which has continued with undiminished lustre through the revolutions of a century. The fame of Locke is visibly on the decline; the speculations of Malebranche are scarcely heard of in France; and Kant, the greatest metaphysical name on the Continent, sways a doubtful sceptre amidst a host of opponents. It is not our intention to inquire at large into the reason of the transitory fame acquired by this class of writers. Whether it be that the science itself rests on a precarious foundation; that its discoveries can never be brought to a decisive test; that it is too remote from the business of life to be generally interesting; that it does not compensate by its use, for its defect in the fascinations of pleasure; and that it is not, like the intricacies of law, interwoven with the institutions of society: the fact itself is unquestionable. He who aspires to a reputation that shall survive the vicissitudes of opinion and of time, must aim at some other character than that of a metaphysician.

Grand and imposing in its appearance, it seems to lay claim to universal empire, and to supply the measures and the criteria of all other knowledge; but it resembles in its progress the conquests of a Sesostris and a Bacchus, who overran kingdoms and provinces with ease, but made

no permanent settlements, and soon left no trace of their achievements.

The case is very different with the popular writers, who, without attempting to form a theory, or to trace to their first elements, the vast assemblage of passions and principles which enter into the composition of man, are satisfied with describing him as he is. These writers exhibit characters, paint manners, and display human nature in those natural and affecting lights, under which it will always appear to the eye of an acute and feeling observer. Without staying to inquire why it is that men think, feel, reason, remember,—are attracted by some objects or repelled by others, they take them as they are, and delineate the infinitely various modifications and appearances assumed by our essential nature. From the general mass of human passions and manners, they detach such portions as they suppose will admit of the most beautiful illustrations, or afford the most instructive lessons. Next to a habit of self-reflection, accompanied with an attentive survey of real life, writers of this kind are the best guides in the acquisition of that most important branch of knowledge, an acquaintance with mankind. As they profess to consider human nature under some particular aspect, their views are necessarily more limited than those of metaphysical writers; but if they are less extensive, they are more certain; if they occupy less ground, they cultivate it better. In the language of Bacon, "they come home to men's business and bosom." As they aim at the delineation of living nature, they can never deviate far from truth and reality without becoming ridiculous; while, for the fidelity of their representations, they appeal to the common sense of mankind, the dictates of which they do little more than embody and adorn. The system of Locke or of Hartley, it is possible to conceive, may be exploded by the prevalence of a different theory; but it is absurd to suppose, that the remarks on life and manners contained in the writings of Addison or of Johnson, can ever be discredited by a future moralist. In the formation of a theory, more especially in matters so subtle and complicated as those which relate to the mind,

the sources of error are various. When a chain of reasoning consists of many links, a failure of connexion in any part will produce a mass of error in the result, proportioned to the length to which it is extended. In a complicated combination, if the enumeration of particulars in the outset is not complete, the mistake is progressive and incurable. In the ideal philosophy of Locke, for example, if the sources of sensation are not sufficiently explored, or if there be, as some of the profoundest thinkers have suspected, other sources of ideas than those of sensation, the greater part of his system falls to the ground. The popular writers, of whom we have been speaking, are not exposed to such dangers. It is possible, indeed, that many particular views may be erroneous; but, as their attention is continually turned to living nature, provided they be possessed of competent talents, their general delineations cannot fail of being distinguished by fidelity and truth. While a few speculative men amuse themselves with discussing the comparative merits of different metaphysical systems, these are the writers, whose sentiments, conveyed through innumerable channels, form the spirit of the age; nor is it to be doubted, that the Spectator and the Rambler have imparted a stronger impulse to the public mind than all the metaphysical systems in the world. On this account we are highly gratified when we meet with a writer, who, to a vein of profound and original thought, together with just views of religion and of morals, joins the talent of recommending his ideas by the graces of imagination, and the powers of eloquence. Such a writer we have the happiness of reviewing at present. Mr. Foster's name is probably new to most of our readers; but, if we may judge from the production before us, he cannot long be concealed from the notice and applause of the literary world. In an age of mediocrity, when the writing of books has become almost a mechanical art, and a familiar acquaintance with the best models has diffused taste, and diminished genius, it is impossible to peruse an author who displays so great original powers without a degree of surprise. We are ready to inquire by what peculiar

felicity he was enabled to desert the trammels of custom, to break the spell by which others feel themselves bound, and to maintain a career so perfectly uncontrolled and independent. A cast of thought, original and sublime, an unlimited command of imagery, a style varied, vigorous, and bold, are some of the distinguishing features of these very singular Essays. We add, with peculiar satisfaction, that they breathe the spirit of piety and benevolence, and bear the most evident indications of a heart deeply attached to scriptural truths. Though Mr. F. has thought fit to give to his work the title of "Essays, in a series of *Letters*," the reader must not expect any thing in the epistolary style. They were written, the author informs us, in letters to a friend, but with a view to publication; and in their distinct developement of a subject, and fulness of illustration, they resemble regular dissertations, rather than familiar epistles. We could have wished, indeed, that he had suppressed the title of Letters, as it may excite in the reader an expectation of colloquial ease and grace, which will not be gratified in the perusal. A little attention to this circumstance, though it might have impaired the regularity of their method, would have rendered them more fascinating. The subjects appear to us well chosen, sufficiently uncommon to afford scope for original remarks, and important enough to call forth the exertions of the strongest powers. They are the following: 1. On a Man's writing Memoirs of himself: 2. On Decision of Character: 3. On the application of the Epithet Romantic: 4. On some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion has been rendered less acceptable to Persons of cultivated Taste.

We shall endeavour to give our readers an idea of the general design of each of these essays; and to enable them, by a few extracts, to judge of the manner in which that design is executed.

In the first essay, the author expatiates at large on the influence of external events in the formation of character. This influence he traces to four sources; instruction, companionship, reading, and attention to the state and manners of mankind.

Among the many objects calculated to form the character and impress the heart, Mr. F. enumerates natural scenery; at the same time deploring that want of fancy and sensibility, which often renders it productive of so little effect. The passage in which he adverts to this subject is so beautiful, that we cannot prevail on ourselves to withhold it from the reader. He will see at once that the writer has viewed nature with the eye of a poet, and has deeply imbibed the delicious enchantment which he so eloquently describes.

"It might be supposed that the scenes of nature, an "amazing assemblage of phenomena, if their effect were "not lost through familiarity, would have a powerful in- "fluence on all opening minds, and transfuse into the "internal economy of ideas and sentiment something of "a character and a colour correspondent to the beauty, "vicissitude, and grandeur, which continually press on "the senses. On minds of genius they often have this "effect; and Beattie's *Minstrel* may be as just as it is a "fascinating description of such a spirit. But on the "greatest number this influence operates feebly; you "will not see the process in children, nor the result in "mature persons. The charms of nature are objects only "of sight and hearing, not of sensibility and imagination; "and even the sight and hearing do not receive impres- "sions sufficiently distinct or forcible for clear recollec- "tion; it is not, therefore, strange that these impressions "seldom go so much deeper than the senses as to awaken "pensiveness or enthusiasm, and fill the mind with an "interior permanent scenery of beautiful images at its "own command. This defect of fancy and sensibility is "unfortunate amidst a creation infinitely rich with grand "and beautiful objects, which, imparting something more "than images to a mind adapted and habituated to con- "verse with nature, inspire an exquisite sentiment that "seems like the emanation of a spirit residing in them. "It is unfortunate, I have thought within these few "minutes, while looking out on one of the most enchant- "ing nights of the most interesting season of the year, "and hearing the voices of a company of persons, to

" whom I can perceive that this soft and solemn shade " over the earth, the calm sky, the beautiful stripes of " cloud, the stars, and waning moon just risen, are things " not in the least more interesting than the walls, ceiling, " and candle-light of a room."—Vol. I. pp. 26, 27. [Pp. 22, 23, *Seventh Edition.*]

Towards the close of the essay, in tracing the steps by which some have arrived at the last stage of daring impiety, the denial of a God, the author evinces, in a masterly manner, the presumption of the atheist, and places the extreme absurdity of pretending to demonstrate the non-existence of a Deity, in a light in which we do not remember to have seen it exhibited. Speaking of a pretended heroism attached to atheistic impiety, he adds:

" But, indeed, it is heroism no longer, if he *knows* that " there is no God. The wonder then turns on the great " process by which a man could grow to the immense " intelligence that can know that there is no God. What " ages, and what lights are requisite for THIS attainment! " This intelligence involves the very attributes of divinity, " while a God is denied. For, unless this man is omni- " present, unless he is at this moment in every place in " the universe, he cannot know but there may be in some " place manifestations of a Deity by which even *he* would " be overpowered. If he does not know absolutely every " agent in the universe, the one that he does not know " may be God. If he is not himself the chief agent in " the universe, and does not know what is so, that which " is so may be God. If he is not in absolute possession " of all the propositions that constitute universal truth, " the one which he wants may be, that there is a God. " If he cannot, with certainty, assign the cause of all that " exists, that cause may be a God. If he does not know " every thing that has been done in the immeasurable " ages that are past, some things may have been done by " a God. Thus, unless he knows all things, that is, pre- " cludes another Deity by being one himself, he cannot " know that the Being whose existence he rejects does " not exist. But he must *know* that he does not exist, " else he deserves equal contempt and compassion for the " temerity with which he firmly avows his rejection, and " acts accordingly."—Vol. I. pp. 60—62. [Pp. 48, 49, *Seventh Edition.*]

The next essay, *On Decision of Character*, appears to us superior to the former. The subject is pursued with greater regularity, the conceptions are more profound, and the style is more chaste and classical. After placing in strong contrast the features of a decisive and of an irresolute character, he proceeds to analyse the elements of which the former is composed. Among these, he assigns the first place to a firm confidence in our own judgement; which, he justly observes, notwithstanding the general disposition of mankind to overrate their powers, is no common attainment. With those who are most disposed to think highly of their own abilities, it is common, when they arrive at the moment of action, to distrust their judgement; and, as the author beautifully expresses it, " their mind seems all at once placed in a misty vacuity, where it reaches round on all sides, and finds nothing to lay hold of." The next ingredient essential to decision of character, is a state of cogent feeling, an intense ardour of mind, precluding indifference and delay. In addition to these qualities, courage is required, without which it is obvious that resolutions the most maturely formed, are liable to vanish at the first breath of opposition. In the remaining part of the essay, Mr. F. illustrates the influence of several circumstances of an external nature, which tend to form or to augment the quality of which he has been treating. The principal of these are *opposition*, *desertion*, and *success*. It would prolong this article too much, to attempt to follow the author in these particulars; suffice it to remark, that under each of them will be found many just and important observations. He concludes with briefly recommending a discipline conducive to the attainment of a decisive character. He particularly insists on the propriety of inuring the mind to a habit of reasoning; and that, not in a superficial and desultory manner, but by steadily following the train till we reach a legitimate conclusion.

We cannot dismiss this part of the work without pre-

senting our readers with an extract from the character of Howard, whose virtues have been emblazoned by the gorgeous eloquence of Burke; but we are mistaken if they have ever been painted in a more masterly manner than in the following portrait:—

"In this distinction *(decision)* no man ever exceeded, "for instance, or ever will exceed, the late illustrious "Howard. The energy of his determination was so "great, that if, instead of being habitual, it had been "shown only for a short time, on particular occasions, it "would have appeared a vehement impetuosity; but by "being unintermitted it had an equability of manner, "which scarcely appeared to exceed the tone of a calm "constancy, it was so totally the reverse of any thing "like turbulence or agitation. It was the calmness of an "intensity, kept uniform by the nature of the human "mind forbidding it to be more, and by the character of "the individual forbidding it to be less. The habitual "passion of his mind was a measure of feeling almost "equal to the temporary extremes and paroxysms of "common minds: as a great river in its customary state, "is equal to a small or moderate one when swollen to a "torrent. The moment of finishing his plans in deliberation, and commencing them in action, was the same. "I wonder what must have been the amount of that "bribe, in emolument or pleasure, that would have detained him a week inactive after their final adjustment. "The law which carries water down a declivity, was not "more unconquerable and invariable, than the determination of his feelings towards the main object. The "importance of this object held his faculties in a state "of excitement which was too rigid to be affected by "lighter interests, and on which, therefore, the beauties "of nature and of art had no power. He had no leisure "feeling which he could spare to be diverted among the "innumerable varieties of the extensive scene which he "traversed; all his subordinate feelings lost their separate "existence and operation, by falling into the grand one. "There have not been wanting trivial minds to mark "this as a fault in his character. But the mere men of

"taste ought to be silent respecting such a man as "Howard; he is above their sphere of judgement. The "invisible spirits, who fulfil their commission of philanthropy among mortals, do not care about pictures, "statues, and sumptuous buildings; and no more did he, "when the time in which he must have inspected and "admired them would have been taken from the work "to which he had consecrated his life.* The curiosity "which he might feel, was reduced to wait till the hour "should arrive when its gratification should be presented "by conscience, which kept a scrupulous charge of all "his time, as the most sacred duty of that hour. If he "was still at every hour, when it came, fated to feel the "attractions of the fine arts but the second claim, they "might be sure of their revenge; for no other man will "ever visit Rome under such a despotic consciousness of "duty, as to refuse himself time for surveying the magnificence of its ruins. Such a sin against taste is very "far beyond the reach of common saintship to commit. "It implied an inconceivable severity of conviction, that "he had *one thing to do;* and that he, who would do "some great thing in this short life, must apply himself "to the work with such a concentration of his forces, as, "to idle spectators, who live only to amuse themselves, "looks like insanity. His attention was so strongly and "tenaciously fixed on his object, that, even at the greatest "distance, as the Egyptian pyramids to travellers, it appeared to him with a luminous distinctness as if it were "nigh, and beguiled the toilsome length of labour and "enterprise by which he was to reach it. It was so "conspicuous before him, that not a step deviated from "the direction, and every movement and every day was "an approximation. As his method referred every thing "he did and thought to the end, and as his exertion did "not relax for a moment, he made the trial, so seldom "made—what is the utmost effect which may be granted "to the last possible efforts of a human agent; and,

* Mr. Howard, however, was not destitute of taste for the fine arts. His house at Cardington was better filled with paintings and drawings, than any other, on a small scale, that we ever saw.—REV.

" therefore, what he did not accomplish, he might con-
" clude to be placed beyond the sphere of mortal activity,
" and calmly leave to the immediate disposal of Provi-
" dence."—Pp. 156—160. [Pp. 125—128, *Seventh Edition.*]

We have one remark to make, before we conclude our review of this Essay. We are a little apprehensive, that the glowing colours in which the imagination of Mr. F. has painted an unyielding constancy of mind, may tend to seduce some of his readers into an intemperate admiration of that quality, without duly distinguishing the object to which it is directed, and the motives by which it is sustained. We give our author full credit for the purity of his principles; we are firmly persuaded that he is not to be classed among the impious idolaters of mental energy. But we could wish that he had more fully admonished his readers to regard resolution of character not as a virtue, so much as a means of virtue—a mere instrument that owes its value entirely to the purpose to which it is employed; and that, wherever nature has conferred it, an additional obligation is imposed of purifying the principles and regulating the heart. It might, at first view, be thought impossible, as Mr. F. intimates, that men should be found, who are as resolute in the prosecution of criminal enterprises, as they could be supposed to be in the pursuit of the most virtuous objects. It is surely a melancholy proof of something wrong in the constitution of human nature, that a quality so important as that of energetic decision, is so little under the regulation of principle; that constancy is so much more frequently to be seen in what is wrong than in what is right; and, in fine, that the *world* can boast so many more heroes than the *church*.

In the third Essay, *On the Application of the Epithet Romantic*, Mr Foster takes occasion to expose the eagerness with which terms of censure are adopted by men, who, instead of calmly weighing the merits of an undertaking, or a character, think it sufficient to express their antipathy by some opprobrious appellation. The epithet *romantic* holds a distinguished place in the vocabulary of

contempt. If a scheme of action, which it requires much benevolence to conceive, and much vigour to execute, be proposed, by many it will be thought completely exploded, when they have branded it with the appellation of *romantic*. Thus selfishness and indolence, arraying themselves in the garb of wisdom, assume the pride of superiority, when they ought to feel the humiliation of guilt. To imitate the highest examples, to do good in ways not usual to the same rank of life, to make great exertions and sacrifices in the cause of religion and with a view to eternal happiness, to determine without delay, to reduce to practice whatever we applaud in theory, are modes of conduct which the world will generally condemn as romantic, but which this author shows to be founded on the highest reason. In unfolding the true idea of the *romantic*, as applicable to a train of sentiments, or course of conduct, he ascribes whatever may be justly so denominated, to the predominance of the imagination over the other powers. He points out the symptoms of this disease, as apparent—in the expectation of a peculiar destiny, while the fancy paints to itself scenes of unexampled felicity—in overlooking the relation which subsists between ends and means—in counting upon casualties instead of contemplating the stated order of events,—and in hoping to realize the most momentous projects, without any means at all, or by means totally inadequate to the effect. Some of the illustrations which the author introduces in this part of his subject are peculiarly happy. We are delighted to find him treating with poignant ridicule those superficial pretenders, who, without positively disavowing any dependence on divine agency, hope to reform the world, and to bring back a paradisaical state, by the mere force of moral instruction. For the prospect of the general prevalence of virtue and happiness, we are indebted to revelation. We have no reason to suppose the minds of our modern infidels sufficiently elevated to have thought of the cessation of wars, and the universal diffusion of peace and love, but for the information which they have obtained from the Scriptures. From these they derived the doc-

trine of a millennium; and they have received it as they have done every thing else, only to corrupt it: for, exploding all the means by which the Scriptures have taught us to expect the completion of this event, they rely merely on the resources of reason and philosophy. They impiously deck themselves with the spoils of Revelation, and take occasion, from the hopes and prospects which she alone supplies, to deride her assistance, and to idolize the powers of human nature. That Being, who planted christianity by miraculous interposition, and by the effusion of his Spirit produced such effects in the hearts of millions, as afford a specimen and a pledge of an entire renovation, has also assured us, that violence and injustice shall cease, and that *none shall hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain, because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God.* But, it seems, Revelation is to have no concern in this work; philosophy is to effect every thing; and we are to look to the Political Justice of Godwin and the Moral Code of Volney, for that which christians were so weak as to expect at the hand of Deity.

The conclusion which our author draws from the insufficiency of mere human agency to effect that great renovation in the character and condition of men, which revelation teaches us to expect, is most just and consolatory. We should have been happy to transcribe the passage; but lest we should exceed our limits, we refer our readers to Vol. II. pp. 87, 88. [Pp. 244—247, *Seventh Edition.*]

The last Essay in these volumes attempts to assign *some of the causes that have rendered evangelical religion less acceptable to persons of cultivated taste.* This essay is the most elaborate. Aware of the delicacy and difficulty of his subject, the author seems to have summoned all the powers of his mind, to enable him to grasp it in all its extent, and to present it in all its force and beauty. This essay is itself sufficient, in our opinion, to procure the author a brilliant and lasting reputation.

It is proper to remind our readers, that, in tracing the causes which have tended to produce in men of taste an

aversion to evangelical religion, Mr. F. avowedly confines himself to those which are of a *subordinate* class, while he fully admits the *primary cause* to be that *inherent corruption* of nature, which renders men strongly indisposed to any communication from heaven. We could, however, have wished that he had insisted on this more largely. The Scriptures ascribe the rejection of the gospel to one general principle: *the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The peculiar doctrines of christianity are distinguished by a spirit irreconcilably at variance with that of the world. The deep repentance it enjoins strikes at the pride and levity of the human heart. The mystery of an incarnate and crucified Saviour must necessarily confound the reason, and shock the prejudices, of a mind which will admit nothing that it cannot perfectly reduce to the principles of philosophy. The whole tenour of the life of Christ, the objects he pursued, and the profound humiliation he exhibited, must convict of madness and folly the favourite pursuits of mankind. The virtues usually practised in society, and the models of excellence most admired there, are so remote from that holiness which is enjoined in the New Testament, that it is impossible for a taste which is formed on the one, to perceive the charms of the other. The happiness which it proposes in an union with God, and a participation of the image of Christ, is so far from being congenial to the inclinations of worldly men, that it can scarcely be mentioned without exciting their ridicule and scorn. General speculations on the Deity have much to amuse the mind, and to gratify that appetite for the wonderful which thoughtful and speculative men are delighted to indulge. Religion, viewed in this light, appears more in the form of an exercise to the understanding, than a law to the heart. Here the soul expatiates at large, without feeling itself controlled or alarmed. But when evangelical truths are presented, they bring God so near, if we may be allowed the expression, and speak with so commanding a voice to the conscience, that they leave no alterna-

tive but that of submissive acquiescence or proud revolt. As men of taste are, for the most part, men of the world, not at all distinguished from others by a greater familiarity with religious ideas, these observations are applicable to them in their utmost extent.

Though we thought it right to suggest these hints, we wish not to be understood to convey any censure on Mr. F. for confining his attention principally to other topics. In discussing more fully and profoundly some of the subordinate causes, which have come in aid of the primary one, to render men of cultivated taste averse to evangelical piety, we think he has rendered an important service to the public.

The first cause he assigns is, that of its being the religion of many weak and uncultivated minds; in consequence of which it becomes inseparably associated, in the conceptions of many, with the intellectual poverty of its disciples, so as to wear a mean and degraded aspect. We regret that we cannot follow the author in his illustration of this topic. We must be content with observing, that he has exposed the weakness of this prejudice in a most masterly and triumphant manner.

The second cause which the author assigns as having had, in his opinion, a considerable influence in prejudicing elegant and cultivated minds against evangelical piety, is the peculiarity of language adopted in the discourses and books of its teachers, the want of a more classical form of diction, and the profusion of words and phrases which are of a technical and systematical cast.

We are inclined to think, with Mr. F., that the cause of religion has suffered considerably from the circumstance here mentioned. The superabundance of phrases appropriated by some pious authors to the subject of religion, and never applied to any other purpose, has not only the effect of disgusting persons of taste, but of obscuring religion itself. As they are seldom defined, and never exchanged for equivalent words, they pass current without being understood. They are not the vehicle,—they are the substitute of thought. Among a certain description of christians, they become, by degrees, regarded with a mystic awe, insomuch that if a writer expressed the very same ideas in different phrases, he would be condemned as a heretic. To quit the magical circle of words, in which many christians suffer themselves to be confined, excites as great a clamour as the boldest innovation in sentiment. Controversies, which have been agitated with much warmth, might often have been amicably adjusted, or even finally decided, could the respective partisans have been prevailed upon to lay aside their predilection for phrases, and honestly resolve to examine their real import. In defiance of the dictates of candour and good sense, these have been obstinately retained, and have usually been the refuge of ignorance, the apple of discord, and the watch-words of religious hostility. In some instances, the evil which we lament has sprung from a more amiable cause. The force and solemnity of devotional feelings are such, that they seem to consecrate every thing with which they have been connected; and as the bulk of pious people have received their religious impressions from teachers more distinguished for their simplicity and zeal, than for comprehension of mind and copiousness of language, they learn to annex an idea of sanctity to that set of phrases with which they have been most familiar. These become the current language of religion, to which subsequent writers conform, partly, perhaps, from indolence, and partly from the fear of offending their brethren.

To these causes we may add the contentious and sectarian spirit of modern times, which has taught the different parties of christians to look on one another with an unnatural horror, to apprehend contamination from the very phrases employed by each other, and to invent, each for itself, a dialect as narrow and exclusive as their whimsical singularities. But while we concur, in the main, with Mr. F. on this subject, we are disposed to think that he has carried his representations too far, both with respect to the magnitude of the abuse itself, and the probable advantages which would ensue on its removal. The repugnance of the human mind, in its

unenlightened state, to the peculiarities of the christian doctrine, is such, that we have little hope of its yielding to the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. Till it is touched and humbled by grace, we are apprehensive that it will retain its aversion, and not suffer itself to be cheated into an approbation of the gospel by any artifice of words. Exhibit evangelical religion in what colours you will, the worldly-minded and the careless will shrink from the obtrusion of unwelcome ideas. Cowper has become, in spite of his religion, a popular poet, but his success has not been such as to make religion popular; nor have the gigantic genius and fame of Milton shielded from the ridicule and contempt of his admirers, that system of religion which he beheld with awful adoration.

In treating subjects properly theological, we apprehend great caution should be used not to deviate wantonly and unnecessarily from the phraseology of scripture. The apostle tells us, that in preaching the gospel he did not use the enticing words of man's wisdom, but such words as the Holy Ghost taught him. We do not, indeed, contend, that in the choice of every particular word or phrase he was immediately inspired; but we think it reasonable to believe that the unction which was on his heart, and the perfect illumination that he possessed, led him to employ such terms in the statement of the mysteries of christianity, as were better adapted than any others to convey their real import, which we are the more inclined to conclude, from observing the sameness of phraseology which pervades the writings of the apostles, when they are treating on the same subject. As the truths which the revelation of the New Testament unfolds are perfectly original, and transcendently important, it might naturally be expected that the communication of them would give birth to an original cast of phraseology, or, in other words, a steady adherence to certain terms, in order to render the ideas which they convey fixed, precise, and unchangeable.

In teaching the principles of every science, it is found necessary to select or invent terms, which, though originally of a laxer signification, are afterwards restricted and confined *to one peculiar modification of thought*, and constitute the technical language of that science. Such terms are always capable of being defined (for mere words convey nothing to the mind); but to substitute a definition in their place would be tedious circumlocution, and to exchange the term itself for a different one, would frequently lead to dangerous mistakes.

In the original elementary parts of a language, there are, in truth, few or no synonymes; for what should prompt men, in the early period of literature, to invent a word that neither conveyed any new idea, nor enabled them to present an old one with more force and precision? In the progress of refinement, indeed, regard to copiousness and harmony has enriched language with many exotics, which are merely those words in a foreign language that perfectly correspond to terms in our own; as *felicity* for *happiness*, *celestial* for *heavenly*, and a multitude of others. Since, then, the nature of language is such, that no two terms are exactly of the same force and import (except in the case last mentioned), we cannot but apprehend that dangerous consequences would result from a studied attempt to vary from the standard phraseology, where the statement of doctrines is concerned, and that, by changing the terms, the ideas themselves might be changed or mutilated. In teaching a religion designed for the use and benefit of all mankind, it is certainly desirable that the technical words, the words employed in a peculiar and appropriate sense, should be few; but to fix and perpetuate the ideas, and to preserve *the faith once delivered to the saints*, from the caprices of fancy, and the dangers of innovation, it seems necessary that there should be some. We are inclined to think, that in inculcating christian morality, and in appeals and addresses to the heart, a much greater latitude may be safely indulged, than in the statement of *peculiar doctrines;* and that a more bold and varied diction, with a wider range of illustration and allusion than is usually employed, would often be attended with the happiest effect. Mr. Foster has given, in many parts

of these volumes, beautiful specimens of what we intend.

With respect to the copious use of scripture language, which Mr. F. condemns, (in our opinion with too much severity,) as giving an uncouth and barbarous air to theological books, we prefer a middle course; without applauding the excess to which it is carried by many pious writers, on the one hand; or wishing it to be kept so entirely apart as Mr. F. contends for, on the other. To say nothing of the inimitable beauties of the Bible, considered in a literary view, which are universally acknowledged, it is the book which every devout man is accustomed to consult as the oracle of God; it is the companion of his best moments, and the vehicle of his strongest consolations. Intimately associated in his mind with every thing dear and valuable, its diction more powerfully excites devotional feelings than any other; and when temperately and soberly used, imparts an unction to a religious discourse, which nothing else can supply. Besides, is there not room to apprehend, that a studied avoidance of the scripture phraseology, and a care to express all that it is supposed to contain in the forms of classical diction, might ultimately lead to a neglect of the Scriptures themselves, and a habit of substituting flashy and superficial declamation in the room of the saving truths of the gospel? Such an apprehension is but too much verified by the most celebrated sermons of the French; and still more by some modern compositions in our own language, which usurp that title. For devotional impression, we conceive that a very considerable tincture of the language of the scriptures, or at least such a colouring as shall discover an intimate acquaintance with those inimitable models, will generally succeed best.

It is impossible to establish an universal rule, since different methods are equally adapted to different purposes; and, therefore, we are willing to allow with Mr. F. that, where the fashionable and the gay are addressed, and the prejudices arising from a false refinement are to be conciliated, whatever in the diction might repel by an

appearance of singularity, should be carefully shunned. Accordingly, we equally admire, in *The Rise and Progress of Religion*, by Dr. Doddridge, and in *The Rural Philosophy* of Mr. Bates, the dexterity with which these excellent writers have suited their composition to their respective classes of readers. On the whole, let it once for all be remembered, that men of taste form a very small part of the community, of no greater consequence in the eyes of their Creator than others; that the end of all religious discourse is the salvation of souls; and that to a mind which justly estimates the weight of eternal things, it will appear a greater honour to have converted a sinner from the error of his way, than to have wielded the thunder of a Demosthenes, or to have kindled the flame of a Cicero.

We hasten to close this article, by making a few observations on the last cause which our author has assigned, for the general distaste that persons of polite and elegant attainments usually discover toward evangelical religion. This is, the neglect and contempt with which it has been almost constantly treated by our fine writers; of whose delinquency, in this respect, the author takes a wide and extensive survey, exposing their criminality with a force of eloquence that has perhaps never before been exerted on this subject. Though his attention is chiefly directed to the influence of modern literature, yet, as the writings of the ancients, and especially of the poets, have had a powerful operation in forming the taste and sentiments of succeeding generations, he has extended his notice to these, and has made some most striking animadversions on the ancient authors of the epopœia, and particularly on Homer.

We must do justice to his intrepidity in venturing to attack the idol of all classical scholars: nor can he have failed to foresee the manner in which it would be attempted to be repelled. They will remind him, that the lawfulness of defensive war has seldom been called in question; that the one in which Homer's heroes were engaged, was not only just, but meritorious, being undertaken to avenge a most signal affront and injury; that

no subject could be more suited to the epic muse, either on account of its magnitude, or the deep interest it excited; that having chosen it, the poet is to be commended for throwing into it all the fire of which it was susceptible; that to cherish in the breasts of youth a gallant and warlike spirit, is the surest defence of nations; and that this spirit, under proper regulations, constitutes that θυμοειδης which Plato extols so highly in his Republic, as the basis of a manly, heroic character. This, and much more than this, will be said: but when our Grecians have spent all their arrows, it will remain an incontestable fact, that an enthusiastic admiration of the Iliad of Homer is but a bad preparation for relishing the beauties of the New Testament. What then is to be done? Shall we abandon the classics, and devote ourselves solely to the perusal of modern writers, where the maxims inculcated, and the principles taught, are little, if at all, more in unison with those of christianity? —a fact, which Mr. F. acknowledges and deplores. While things continue as they are, we are apprehensive, therefore, that we should gain nothing by neglecting the unrivalled productions of genius left us by the ancients. but a deterioration of taste, without any improvement in religion. The evil is not to be corrected by any partial innovation of this kind. Until a more christian spirit pervades the world, we are inclined to think that the study of the classics is, on the whole, advantageous to public morals, by inspiring an elegance of sentiment, and an elevation of soul, which we should in vain seek for elsewhere.

The total inattention of the great majority of our fine writers, to all the distinguishing features of the religion they profess, affords a most melancholy reflection. It has no doubt excited the notice of many, and has been deeply lamented; but it has never been placed in a light so serious and affecting as in the volumes before us. In the observations which our author makes on the Essay on Man, we are delighted and surprised to find at once so much philosophical truth and poetical beauty. His critique on the writings of Addison and Johnson, evinces

deep penetration; and, as it respects the former, is uncommonly impressive and important.

We take our leave of this work with sincere reluctance. For the length to which we have extended our review, the subject must be our apology. It has fared with us, as with a traveller who passes through an enchanting country, where he meets with so many beautiful views and so many striking objects which he is loath to quit, that he loiters till the shades of evening insensibly fall upon him. We are far, however, from recommending these volumes as faultless. Mr. F.'s work is rather an example of the power of genius, than a specimen of finished composition: it lies open in many points to the censure of those minor critics, who, by the observation of a few technical rules, may easily avoid its faults, without reaching one of its beauties. The author has paid too little attention to the construction of his sentences. They are for the most part too long, sometimes involved in perplexity, and often loaded with redundances. They have too much of the looseness of an harangue, and too little of the compact elegance of regular composition. An occasional obscurity pervades some parts of the work. The mind of the writer seems at times to struggle with conceptions too mighty for his grasp, and to present confused masses, rather than distinct delineations of thought. This, however, is to be imputed to the originality, not the weakness, of his powers. The scale on which he thinks is so vast, and the excursions of his imagination are so extended, that they frequently carry him into the most unbeaten track, and among objects where a ray of light glances in an angle only without diffusing itself over the whole. On ordinary topics, his conceptions are luminous in the highest degree. He places the idea which he wishes to present in such a flood of light, that it is not merely visible itself, but it seems to illumine all around it. He paints metaphysics, and has the happy art of arraying what in other hands would appear cold and comfortless abstractions, in the warmest colours of fancy. Without the least affectation of frivolous ornaments, without quitting his argument in pursuit of imagery, his imagi-

nation becomes the perfect handmaid of his reason, ready at every moment to spread her canvass, and present her pencil. But what pleases us most, and affords us the highest satisfaction, is to find such talents enlisted on the side of true christianity; nor can we help indulging a benevolent triumph at the accession of powers to the cause of evangelical piety, which its most distinguished opponents would be proud to possess.

REVIEW

OF

CUSTANCE ON THE CONSTITUTION.

A Concise View of the Constitution of England. By GEORGE CUSTANCE. *Dedicated, by permission, to William Wilberforce, Esq. M. P. for the County of York.* 12mo. pp. 474. Price 6s. bds. Kidderminster: Gower. London: Longman and Co. Hatchard. 1808.

IT were surely to be wished, that every man had a competent acquaintance with the laws and constitution of the country to which he belongs. Patriotism is a blind and irrational impulse, unless it is founded on a knowledge of the blessings we are called to secure, and the privileges we propose to defend. In a tyrannical state, it is natural for the ruling power to cherish political ignorance, which can alone reconcile men to the tame surrender of their natural rights. The diffusion of light and knowledge is very unfavourable to ill-founded pretensions of every sort, but to none more than the encroachments of arbitrary power and lawless violence. The more we explore the recesses of a dungeon, the less likely are we to be reconciled to take up our residence in it. But the venerable fabric of the British constitution, our hereditary mansion, whether it be tried by the criterion of convenience or of beauty, of ancient prescription or of practical utility, will bear the most rigid examination; and the more it is contemplated, will be the more admired.

The Romans were so conscious of the importance of imparting to the rising generation an early knowledge of their laws and constitution, that the contents of the twelve tables were committed to memory, and formed one of the first elements of public instruction. They were sensible that what lays hold of the mind at so early

a period, is not only likely to be long remembered, but is almost sure to command veneration and respect. We are not aware that similar attempts have been made to render the British youth acquainted with the principles of our admirable constitution, not inferior surely to that of the Roman republic; a defect in the system of education, which the circumstances of the present crisis loudly call upon us to supply. When our existence as an independent nation is threatened, when unexampled sacrifices must be made, and, perhaps, the utmost efforts of patience and of persevering courage exerted for our preservation, an attachment to that constitution which is the basis of all our prosperity, cannot be too zealously promoted or too deeply felt. It is a just and enlightened estimate of the invaluable blessings that constitution secures, which alone can make us sustain our present burdens without repining, as well as prepare us for greater privations and severer struggles. For this reason we cannot but look upon the performance before us as a most seasonable publication. One cause of the attention of youth being so little directed to our national laws and constitution, in schools, is probably the want of suitable books. We have an abundance of learned and able writers on these subjects; but few, if any, that are quite adapted to the purpose we are now speaking of. Millar's is a very profound and original work; but it supposes a great deal of previous knowledge, without which it can be scarcely understood, and is in every view better adapted to aid the researches of an antiquary, or the speculations of a philosopher, than to answer the end of an elementary treatise. De Lolme's performance may be deemed more suitable; yet, able and ingenious as it is, it labours under some essential deficiencies, considered in the light of an elementary work. There is in it a spirit of refined speculation, an eagerness to detect and display latent, unthought-of excellencies, in the frame of government, which is very remote from the simplicity requisite in the lessons of youth. Of Blackstone's Commentaries it would be presumptuous in us to attempt an eulogium, after Sir William Jones has pronounced it to

be the *most beautiful outline* that was ever given of any science. Nothing can exceed the luminous arrangement, the vast comprehension, and, we may venture to add from the best authorities, the legal accuracy of this wonderful performance, which, in style and composition, is distinguished by an unaffected grace, a majestic simplicity, which can only be eclipsed by the splendour of its higher qualities. Admirable, however, as these commentaries are, it is obvious that they are much too voluminous and elaborate, to answer the purpose of an introduction to the study of the English constitution. We do, therefore, most sincerely congratulate the public on the appearance of a work, which we can safely recommend, as well fitted to supply a chasm in our system of public instruction. The book before us is, in every view, well adapted for the instruction of youth: the clear and accurate information it conveys upon a most important subject, and the truly christian tincture of its maxims and principles, are well calculated to enlarge the understanding and improve the heart. We beg leave particularly to recommend it to the attention of schools, in which, we conceive, a general acquaintance with the laws and constitution of the country might be cultivated with much advantage, as forming a proper preparation for the active scenes of life. Legal provisions for the security of the best temporal interests of mankind, are the result of so much collective wisdom and experience, and are so continually conversant with human affairs, that we know no study more adapted to invigorate the understanding, and at the same time to give a practical turn to its speculations. The close cohesion of its parts tends to make the mind severely argumentative, while its continual relation to the state of society and its successive revolutions, fences it in on the side of metaphysical abstraction and useless theories. What we look upon (for the reasons already mentioned) to be a most useful and interesting study at all times, we would earnestly recommend as an indispensable duty at the present crisis.

Of the merits of the work before us, the public may form some judgement, when we inform them that it

contains whatever is most interesting to the general reader in Blackstone, together with much useful information derived from Professor Christian, De Lolme, and various other eminent authors. Some will be ready to accuse the writer of having carried his partiality toward whatever is established too far; nor dare we say the charge is entirely unfounded. We are not disposed, however, to be severe upon him on this account. We wish to see the minds of our youth preoccupied with a strong bias in favour of our national institutions. We would wish to see them animated by a warm and generous enthusiasm, and to defer the business of detecting faults, and exposing imperfections, to a future period. Let us only be allowed to remark, that this policy should be temperately employed: lest the mind should suffer a revulsion, and pass, perhaps rather abruptly, from implicit admiration to the contrary extreme; lest, indignant at having been misled, it substitute general censure for undistinguishing applause.

We wish our author had, in common with Blackstone, expressed his disapprobation of the severity of our criminal code. The multiplicity of capital punishments we shall always consider as a reproach to the English nation; though, numerous as they are, they bear no proportion to what they would be, were the law permitted to take its course. The offences deemed capital by the common law are few; the sanguinary complexion of the criminal law, as it now stands, has arisen from the injudicious tampering of the legislature. To us it appears evident, that the *certainty* of punishment will restrain offenders more than its severity; and that, when men are tempted to transgress, they do not weigh the emolument they had in view against the penalty awarded by law, but simply the probability of detection and punishment against that of impunity. Let the punishments be moderate, and this will be the most effectual means of rendering them certain. While nothing can exceed the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality with which justice is administered, we are compelled to look upon the criminal code with very different emotions, and earnestly to wish it

were carefully revised, and made more humane, simple, and precise.

As little can we concur with the author before us, in the defence he sets up of the donation of pensions and sinecures, where there are no pretensions of personal merit or honourable services. Standing quite aloof from party politics, we must affirm, that to whatever extent such a practice exists, exactly in the same proportion is it a source of public calamity and disgrace. To look at it, as our author does, only in a pecuniary view, is to neglect the principal consideration. It is not merely or chiefly as a waste of public money, that the granting of sinecures and pensions to the undeserving ought to be condemned; the venality and corruption it indicates and produces is its worst feature, and an infallible symptom of a declining state. With these exceptions, we have accompanied the author with almost uninterrupted pleasure, and have been highly gratified with the good sense, the extensive information, and the unaffected piety he displays throughout the work. Though a firm and steady churchman himself, he manifests a truly christian spirit toward the protestant dissenters; and is so far from looking with an evil eye on the large toleration they enjoy, that he contemplates with evident satisfaction the laws on which that toleration is founded.

Of the style of this work, it is but justice to say, that, without aspiring to any high degree of ornament, it is pure, perspicuous, and correct, well suited to the subject on which it is employed.

As a fair specimen of Mr. C.'s manner of thinking, we beg leave to lay before our readers the following just and appropriate remarks on *duelling*:—

"Deliberate duelling falls under the head of *express* "*malice*; and the law of England has justly fixed the "crime and punishment of murder upon both the prin- "cipal and accessaries of this most unchristian practice. "Nothing more is necessary with us, to check this daring "violation of all law, than the same firmness and integrity

"in the trial of duellists which so eminently distinguish "an English jury on all other occasions.

"Perhaps it will be asked, what are *men of honour* to "do, if they must not appeal to the pistol and sword? "The answer is obvious: if one *gentleman* has offended "another, he cannot give a more indisputable proof of "genuine courage, than by making a frank acknowledge- "ment of his fault, and asking forgiveness of the injured "party. On the other hand, if he have received an "affront, he ought freely to forgive, as he hopes to be "forgiven of God. And if either of the parties aggra- "vate the matter by sending a challenge to fight, the "other must not be a partaker of sin, if he would obey "God rather than man.

"Still it will be said, that a *military* or *naval* man, at "least, must not decline a challenge, if he would main- "tain the character of a man of courage. But is it not "insulting the loyalty and good sense of the brave de- "fenders of our laws, to imagine that they of all men "must violate them to preserve their honour; since the "king has expressly forbidden any military man to send "a challenge to fight a duel, upon pain of being cashiered, "if an officer; and of suffering corporal punishment, if "a non-commissioned officer, or private soldier? Nor "ought any officer or soldier to upbraid another for re- "fusing a challenge, whom his Majesty positively declares "*he* considers as having only acted in obedience to his "royal orders; and fully acquits of any disgrace that "may be attached to his conduct.* Besides what neces- "sary connexion is there between the fool-hardiness of "one who risks the eternal perdition of his neighbour "and of himself in an unlawful combat, and the patriotic "bravery of him who, when *duty* calls, boldly engages "the enemy of his king and country? None will dis- "pute the courage of the excellent Colonel Gardiner, "who was slain at the battle of Preston Pans, in the "rebellion of 1745. Yet he once refused a challenge,

* "See articles of War sec. 7."

"with this dignified remark: 'I fear sinning, though I "do not fear fighting.'* The fact is, that fighting a "duel is so far from being a proof of a man's possessing "*true* courage, that it is an infallible mark of his "*cowardice*. For he is influenced by 'the fear of man,' "whose praise he loveth more than the praise of God."

* "See Doddridge's Life of Colonel Gardiner, an interesting piece "of Biography, worthy the perusal of every officer in the army and navy."

REVIEW

or

ZEAL WITHOUT INNOVATION.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It was the opinion of some sincere friends of religion, that a republication of the following strictures might have its use in certain quarters, where the literary journal in which they first appeared may possibly not have extended. The writer of these remarks has nothing in view but the promotion of christian charity, the vindication of calumniated innocence, and the counteraction of those insidious arts by which designing men are seeking to advance their personal interest, or those of a party, at the expense of truth and justice. How far the author here animadverted upon falls under this description, must be left to the decision of an impartial public. If it be thought that more commendation ought to have been given in the following strictures to those parts of the work which are confessedly unexceptionable, the writer must be allowed to remark, that the effect of what is good in the performance is entirely defeated by the large infusion of what is of an opposite quality. In appreciating the merits of a writer, the general tendency of his work should be principally regarded, without suffering the edge of censure to be abated by such a mixture of truth as only serves to give a safer and wider circulation to misrepresentation and falsehood.

It has been deemed a capital omission in the following critique, that no notice is taken of the author's illiberal treatment of the puritans. This omission arose partly from a wish to avoid prolixity, and partly from an apprehension it would lead to a discussion not perfectly

relevant to the matter in hand. It would be no difficult matter to construct such a defence of the puritans as would leave this or any other author very little to reply; but to do justice to the subject would require a deduction of facts, and a series of arguments, quite inconsistent with the limits to which we are confined. To oppose assertion to assertion, and invective to invective, could answer no end but the reviving animosities which we should be happy to see for ever extinguished. The controversy betwixt the puritans and their opponents turns entirely on these two questions:—Has any religious society, assuming the name of a church, a right to establish new terms of communion, distinct from those enjoined by Christ and his apostles? Admitting they have such a right, ought these terms to consist in things which the imposers acknowledge to be indifferent, and the party on whom they are enjoined look upon as sinful? Is not this a palpable violation of the apostolical injunction, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations?" We are persuaded we speak the sentiments of some of the best men in the church of England, when we assert that the basis of communion was made narrower at the reformation than is consistent with the dictates of christian charity or sound policy, and that the puritans were treated with a severity altogether unjustifiable. The author of Zeal without Innovation declares himself "dissatisfied with the trite remark that there were faults on both sides, when the guilt of aggression rests so clearly on the heads of the nonconformists." To infer their guilt as aggressors, because they were the first to complain, is begging the question at issue. Before we are entitled to criminate them on this head, it is requisite to inquire into the *justice* of their complaints. They who first discover a truth, are naturally the first to impugn the opposite error. They who find themselves aggrieved are necessarily the first to complain. So that to attach culpability to the party which betrays the first symptoms of dissatisfaction, without farther inquiry, is to confer on speculative error, and on practical tyranny, a claim to unalterable perpetuity—a doctrine well suited

to the mean and slavish maxims inculcated by this writer. The learned Warburton was as little satisfied as himself with the trite remark of there being faults on both sides, but for an opposite reason. "It would be hard," he affirms, "to say who are most to blame; those who oppose established authority for things indifferent, or that authority which rigidly insists on them, and will abate nothing for the sake of tender, misinformed consciences: I say it would be hard to solve this, had not the apostle done it for us, where he says, 'We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and *not to please ourselves*.' 'I myself,' says he, 'do so, and all for the gospel's sake.' This is the man who tells us he had fought a good fight and overcome. And we may believe him; for in this contention, he is always the conqueror who submits."

When the question is fairly put, whether a tender conscience, admitting it to be erroneous, shall be forced, or the imposition of things confessedly indifferent be dropped, it can surely require but little sagacity to return a decisive answer. The arguments which induced Locke to give his suffrage in favour of the nonconformists, the reasons which prevailed on Baxter and on Howe to quit stations of usefulness in the church, and doom themselves to an unprofitable inactivity, will not easily be deemed light or frivolous. The English nation has produced no men more exempt from the suspicion of weakness or caprice than these.

Desirous of composing, rather than inflaming, the dissensions which unhappily subsist among christians, we decline entering farther on this topic, heartily praying, with the apostle, that "grace may be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

REVIEW.

Zeal without Innovation: or, the Present State of Religion and Morals considered, with a View to the Dispositions and Measures required for its Improvement. To which is subjoined, an Address to young Clergymen, intended to guard them against some prevalent Errors. 1808.

THERE are some works which require to be viewed only in a literary light. No important principles are discussed, nor any momentous interests at stake. When this is the case, nothing more is necessary than for a reviewer to exhibit the author's plan, and to give an impartial judgement on the ability with which it is executed. If the merit of the performance be very conspicuous, it is the less necessary to multiply words in order to show it; and if it have little or none, it need not be conducted to the land of forgetfulness with the pomp of criticism. For this reason, the utility of periodical criticism may, in a literary view, be fairly questioned; as it seems like an attempt to anticipate the decision of the public, and prematurely to adjust those pretensions, which, if left to itself, it will be sure to adjust, in time, with the most perfect impartiality. A reviewer may give a momentary popularity to what deserves to be forgotten, but he can neither withhold nor bestow a lasting fame. Cowper, we will venture to say, is not the less admired because the Critical Review, with its usual good taste and discernment, could discover in him no traces of poetic genius.

There are other works, which owe their importance more to the subjects on which they treat, and their tendency to inflame the prejudices, and strike in with the humour, of the public, than to any extraordinary ability.

Their infection renders them formidable. They are calculated to increase the violence of an epidemic disease. The matter of contagion ought not to be slighted on account of the meanness of the vehicle by which it is transmitted. We are sorry to be under the necessity of classing the performance before us with works of that nature; but our conviction of its deserving that character must be our apology for bestowing a degree of attention upon it to which it is not otherwise entitled. The author's professed design is to present a view of the state of religion and morals, and to suggest such remedies as are best adapted to correct the disorder under which they languish. A more noble and important undertaking cannot be conceived. We have only to lament that, in the pursuit of it, he betrays so many mean partialities and ungenerous prejudices, as utterly disqualify him from doing justice to the subject. While we would wish to give him credit for *some* portion of good intention, we are firmly convinced, that had *his eye been single, his whole body had been* more *full of light.* In an attempt to trace the causes of degeneracy in religion and morals, and to point out the proper correctives, nothing is more requisite than a large and catholic spirit, totally emancipated from the shackles of party, joined with extensive knowledge and a discriminating judgement. In the first of these qualities the author is lamentably deficient. He looks at every thing so entirely through the medium of party, that, though he cannot be said to be absolutely blind, he is quite incapable of seeing afar off. His remarks are often shrewd; such as indicate a mind awake and attentive to the scenes which have passed before him. He is sometimes acute, never comprehensive; accurate in details, with little capacity for tracing the consequences and unfolding the energy of general principles. While the title of the work leads us to expect his attention would be entirely directed to the best means of promoting the moral improvement of mankind, the watchful reader will perceive there are *subordinate objects* which he is at least equally solicitous to advance. There is a complication in his views, *a wheel within a wheel*, quite incompatible with simplicity of mind and perfect purity of intention. There appears too much reason to regard him as an artful, bigoted partizan, acting under the disguise of a philanthropist and a reformer. Severe as this censure may seem, we are persuaded our readers will acknowledge its justice, when they are apprised of the leading statements and positions contained in this singular work.

The author sets out with descanting on the state of religion in this country, which he represents as very deplorable: in proof of this, he adduces, among other facts, the violation of the christian sabbath, and the prevailing neglect of public worship. As these symptoms of degeneracy are not found in an equal degree among dissenters and methodists, he is led, by the course of his subject, to notice the state of religion amongst them, where he acknowledges there is no room to complain of a deficiency of zeal. He does not affect to deny that their teachers exhibit the great truths of christianity with energy and effect, and that much good has resulted from their labours. We should naturally suppose a pious man would here find ground for satisfaction, and that, however he might regret the mixture of error with useful efforts, he would rejoice to perceive that real and important good was done any where. It is but justice to him to let him convey his feelings on this subject in his own words.

"From the sad state of things represented in the "preceding section many turn with pleasure to what is "passing among our separatists, whose places of wor- "ship generally exhibit a very different scene to our "parish churches. Here there appears to be some life "and effect. The officiating minister has not half-empty "pews to harangue, but a crowded auditory 'hanging "on his lips.' Whether, however, in what is now before "us, we shall find no cause of uneasiness, when all its "circumstances are considered, admits of great doubt.

"It cannot be denied, that, with all the fanaticism "charged on separatists, (and it is to be feared with "great truth in some instances,) many a profligate has

" been reclaimed, and much good in other ways has
" been done among the lower orders, by the labours of
" their ministers. From these circumstances, and the
" known ignorance and dissoluteness of the times, many,
" without the least degree of adverse intention to our
" established church, have, in the simplicity of their
" hearts, concurred in forwarding the endeavours of the
" separatists. And hence it is, that, in all the more
" populous parts of the country, we see that multitude
" of dissenting chapels, which of late years has increased,
" and is still increasing.

" To some good men, free from all prejudice against
" the church of England, it is matter of no regret that
" the number of separatists increases, provided there be,
" with this circumstance, an increasing regard to christi-
" anity. With such persons, all consideration of forms,
" and modes of worship, is sunk in the greater import-
" ance of genuine faith and piety. But it enters not in
" the thoughts of such persons, that 'tares may spring
" up with the wheat,' and that what at present has a
" good effect, may operate to the production of some-
" thing hereafter of a very different nature. Now such
" we conceive to be the nature of the case before us.
" We have reason to apprehend ill consequences from
" increasing separatism, with whatever zeal for import-
" ant truths, and with whatever success in propagating
" them, it be at present accompanied.

" And first, it may be observed that it goes to the
" annihilation of the established church as a national
" institution. The bulk of every newly-raised congre-
" gation of separatists is composed of persons educated
" within the pale of the church of England. Of these,
" many are heads of families, or likely to become so.
" By commencing dissenters, they, and their posterity,
" however multiplied, are broken off from the national
" church. These detachments from the establishment,
" going on as they have done of late years, must, con-
" sequently, increase the number of those who prefer
" a differently constituted church; and these may in
" time amount to such a majority, as to render it again

" a question with those in power, whether the church of
" England shall any longer have the support of the
" state."—Pp. 14—17.

That the increase of dissenters, *in itself considered*, cannot be a pleasing circumstance to a conscientious churchman, is certain; and if this is all the author means to say, he talks very idly. The true question evidently is, whether the good accruing from the labours of dissenters is a proper subject of congratulation, *although* it may be attended with this incidental consequence, an increased separation from the established church. In a word, is the promotion of genuine christianity, or the advancement of an external communion, the object primarily to be pursued? Whatever excellence may be ascribed to our national establishment by its warmest admirers, still it is a human institution—an institution to which the first ages of the church were strangers, to which christianity was in no degree indebted for its original success, and the merit of which must be brought to the test of utility. It is in the order of means. As an expedient devised by the wisdom of our ancestors for promoting true religion, it is entitled to support just as far as it accomplishes its end. This end, however, is found, in some instances, to be accomplished by means which are of a different description. A fire, which threatens immediate destruction, is happily extinguished before it has had time to extend its ravages; but it is extinguished by persons who have volunteered their services, without waiting for the engineers, who act under the direction of the police. Here is *zeal*, but, unfortunately, accompanied with *innovation*, at which our author is greatly chagrined. How closely has he copied the example of St. Paul, who rejoiced that Christ was preached, though from envy and contention! With him, the promulgation of divine truth was an object so much at heart, that he was glad to see it accomplished, even from the most criminal motives, and by the most unworthy instruments. With our author, the dissemination of the same truth, by some of the best of men, and from the purest motives, is matter of

lamentation and regret. It requires little attention to perceive he has been taught in a different school from the apostle, and studied under a different master.

The eternal interests of mankind are either mere chimæras, or they are matters of infinite importance; compared with which, the success of any party, the increase of any external communion whatever, is mere dust in the balance; and for this plain reason, that the promotion of these interests is the very end of christianity itself. However divided good men may have been with respect to the propriety of legislative interference in the affairs of religion, the arguments by which they have supported their respective opinions have been uniformly drawn from the supposed tendency of such interference, or the contrary, to advance the moral improvement of mankind; and, supposing this to be ascertained, the superior merit of the system to which that tendency belongs was considered as decided. Viewed in this light, the problem is extensive, affording scope for much investigation; while the authority of religion remains unimpaired, and the disputants on each side are left at liberty to indulge the most enlarged sentiments of candour towards each other. Such were the principles on which Hooker and the ablest of his successors rested their defence of the established church. The high church party, of which Mr. Daubeny may be looked upon as the present leader, have taken different grounds. Their system is neither more nor less than popery, faintly disguised, and adapted to the meridian of England. The writer before us, without avowing the sentiments of Daubeny, displays nearly the same intolerance and bigotry,—under this peculiar disadvantage, that his views want the cohesion of system, his bigotry the support of principle. This formal separation of the interests of the church from those of true religion, must inevitably produce the most deplorable consequences. Will the serious and conscientious part of the public be led to form a favourable opinion of a religious community, by hearing it avowed by her champions, that men had better be suffered eternally to perish than to find salvation out of her pale? Will they not naturally

ask what those *higher ends* can be, in comparison of which the eternal welfare of a large portion of our fellow-creatures is deemed a trifle? Could such a spirit be supposed generally prevalent in the clergy of the established church, it would at once lose all that is sacred in their eyes, and be looked upon as a mere combination to gain possession of power and emolument, under pretence of religion. We are mistaken if much mischief has not already accrued from the indulgence of this spirit. It has envenomed the ill qualities naturally generated by the domination of a party. It has produced serious injury to the church, by imboldening men to appear in her defence who bring nothing into the controversy but overweening pride, ceremonial hypocrisy, and priestly insolence. Haughty, contemptuous airs, a visible disdain of the scruples of tender consciences, and frequently of piety itself, except under one garb and fashion, have been too generally assumed by her champions. These features have given inexpressible disgust to pious and candid minds; hurt, as they well may be, to see a religious community, however numerous or respectable, continually vaunting itself, laying exclusive claims to purity and orthodoxy, and seeming to consider it as a piece of condescension to suffer any other denomination to subsist. They cannot dismiss it from their minds, that humility is a virtue proper to the church as well as to an individual, and that ecclesiastical pride may happen to be as offensive to heaven as pride of any other kind. In the church of Rome these qualities have been ever conspicuous; but finding nothing of this sort, in an equal degree, in any other protestant communion, and recollecting that "the lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men be made low," one naturally feels some apprehension that they may not pass unpunished, though they are found in the precincts of a cathedral.

Our author derives no satisfaction from the acknowledged success of dissenters in "turning sinners from the error of their way," from an apprehension that their success may eventually prove injurious to the establishment. He pretends to foresee, from this cause, a continual

transfer of hearers from the church to the conventicle. We beg leave to ask the writer, how such a consequence can ensue, but from the superior zeal and piety of sectaries? To suppose, that with only an *equal* share of these qualities, they will be able to make successful inroad on the church, is to abandon the defence of the hierarchy altogether; since this is acknowledging a radical defect in the system, which operates as a dead weight on its exertions, and disqualifies it for maintaining its ground against rivals; that, in short, instead of being the most efficacious mode of exhibiting and impressing revealed truth, it is intrinsically weak and ineffectual. For that system must surely be acknowledged to be so, which is incapable of interesting the people, and which, by rendering public worship less attractive, produces a general preference of a different mode. To suppose this to be the case is to suppose something essentially wrong, which should be immediately examined and corrected. On this supposition the men are acquitted, the system is arraigned. As this, however, is far from being the opinion of the author, the conclusion returns with irresistible force, that a permanent increase of dissenters can *only* arise from their superior piety and zeal. Now, these are really, in our opinion, qualities too valuable to be dispensed with, whatever interest they may obstruct. Regretting, deeply as we may, in common with our author, that they should have formed an alliance so unfortunate, we must still think it better, not only for their possessors, but for the world at large, for them to be found even here than to have no existence at all; and it is upon this point we are at issue with this *conscientious* reformer. For our parts, we are really so old-fashioned and puritanical, that we had rather behold men awakened and converted among dissenters and methodists, than see them sleep the sleep of death in the arms of an establishment.

But our author, it seems, is filled with pious alarm for the cause of *orthodoxy*, from the increasing separation from the church. "By the sound doctrine its instituted "forms express, it will," he tells us, "as long as it stands, "be a witness to the truth, in periods the most barren

"of ministerial qualification; a rallying point to all truly "christian pastors; and *an accredited voucher for the* "*purity of their instruction.*"—P. 17. How much were the primitive christians to be pitied, who were unhappily destitute of any such "voucher;" and had nothing to secure the permanence of truth but the promised presence of Christ, the illumination of the Spirit, and the light of the Scriptures—poor substitutes, undoubtedly, for the solid basis of creeds and formularies! We should readily concur with the author in his views of the security derived from the subscription of articles, if we could forget a few stubborn facts, which we beg leave humbly to recall to his recollection. Is it not a fact, that the nature and extent of the assent and consent signified by subscription have been the subject of a very thorny controversy, in which more ill faith and chicane have been displayed than were ever before known out of the school of the Jesuits; and that the issue of this controversy has been to establish very generally the doctrine of Paley, that none are excluded by it but quakers, papists, and baptists? Is it not a fact, that the press is teeming every week with publications of the most acrimonious description, written by professed churchmen against persons who have incurred this acrimony merely by their attachment to these articles? Is it not a fact, that the doctrines they exhibit are so scorned and detested in this country, that whoever seriously maintains them is stigmatized with the name of "Methodist?" and that that part of the clergy who preach them are *for that reason alone*, more insulted and despised by their brethren than even the dissenters themselves? It is with peculiar effrontery that this author insists on subscription to articles as a sufficient security for the purity of religious instruction, when it is the professed object of his work to recall his contemporaries to that purity. If he means that the "voucher" he speaks of answers its purpose because *it is* credited, he is plainly laughing at the simplicity of the people: if he means to assert it is *entitled* to credit, we must request him to reflect how he can vindicate himself from the charge of "speaking lies in hypocrisy."

A long course of experience has clearly demonstrated the inefficacy of creeds and confessions to perpetuate religious belief. Of this the only faithful depository is, not that which is "written with ink," but on the "fleshly tables of the heart." The spirit of error is too subtle and volatile to be held by such chains. Whoever is acquainted with ecclesiastical history must know, that public creeds and confessions have occasioned more controversies than they have composed; and that when they ceased to be the subject of dispute they have become antiquated and obsolete. A vast majority of the dissenters of the present day hold precisely the same religious tenets which the puritans did two centuries ago, because it is the instruction they have uniformly received from their pastors; and for the same reason the articles of the national church are almost effaced from the minds of its members, because they have long been neglected or denied by the majority of those who occupy its pulpits. We have never heard of the church of Geneva altering its confession, but we know that Voltaire boasted there was not, in his time, a calvinist in the city; nor have we heard of any proposed amendment in the creed of the Scotch, yet it is certain the doctrines of that creed are preached by a rapidly decreasing minority of the Scottish clergy. From these and similar facts we may conclude, that the doctrines of the church, with or without subscription, are sure to perpetuate themselves where they are faithfully preached; but that the mere circumstance of their being subscribed, will neither secure their being preached nor believed.

"Separatism," says the author, "has no *fixed or perpe-*
"*tual character*: what it is at present, we may, by atten-
"tive observation, be able to pronounce; but no human
"foresight can ascertain what it will be hereafter.
"Though now, in its numerous chapels, the soundest
"doctrine should be heard, we have no security that
"they will not become the schools of heresy. Here, if
"the licentious teacher get a footing, he moulds the
"whole system of ministration to his views; not a
"prayer, not a psalm, not a formulary of any kind, but,

"in this case, will become the vehicle of error."—Pp. 17, 18.

How far, in creatures so liable to mistake, a fixed and perpetual character is an enviable attribute, we shall not stay to inquire; with what right it is claimed on this occasion, it is not very difficult to determine. The Thirty-nine Articles will unquestionably always remain the same; that is, they will always be the Thirty-nine Articles: but it is not quite so certain that they are universally believed; much less, that they will always continue to be so; and least of all, that, after having ceased to be believed, they will receive the sanction of every successive legislature. For our parts, such is our simplicity, that when we read of a fixed and perpetual character, our attention is always wandering to men, to some mode of thinking or feeling to which such perpetuity belongs; instead of resting in the useful contemplation of pen, ink, and paper. With every disposition, however, to do the author justice, we have some fear for the success of his argument; suspecting the dissenters will be ready to reply, 'Our pastors cordially embrace the doctrine contained in your articles; and as this cannot be affirmed of the majority of yours, the question of perpetuity is reduced to this amusing theorem,—In which of two given situations will a doctrine last the longest—where it is believed without being subscribed, or where it is subscribed without being believed?'

The equal justice it is our duty to maintain, obliges us to notice another aspersion which the author casts upon dissenters.

"Every addition Separatism makes to its supporters,
"alters the proportion existing in this country between
"the monarchical and the democratic spirit; either of
"which, preponderating to a considerable degree, might
"be productive of the most serious consequences. For
"it is certain, that, as our church-establishment is
"favourable to monarchy, so is the constitution of our
"dissenting congregations to democracy. The latter
"principle is cherished in all communities, where the
"power resides not in one, or a few, but is shared, in

"certain proportions, among all the members; which is "the case in most of the religious societies under consi- "deration. Let it be remembered, then, that if religion "increase in this way, there is that increasing with it "which is not religion; there is something springing up "which is of a different nature, and which will be sure "to stand, whether that better thing with which it may "grow do or not."—P. 20.

In this statement the author has exhibited his usual inattention to facts. That the people had, in the first ages, a large share in ecclesiastical proceedings, and that their officers were chosen by themselves, is incontrovertibly evident, as well from Scripture as from the authentic monuments of antiquity. The epistles of St. Cyprian, to go no farther, are as full in proof of this point as if they had been written on purpose to establish it. The transfer of power, first from the people to their ministers, and afterwards from them to the Bishop of Rome, was a gradual work, not fully accomplished till many centuries had elapsed from the Christian era. Until the conversion of Constantine, the christian church was an *imperium in imperio*, a spiritual republic, subsisting in the midst of the Roman empire, on which it was completely independent; and its most momentous affairs were directed by popular suffrage. Nor did it in this state, either excite the jealousy or endanger the repose of the civil magistrate; since the distinction betwixt the concerns of this world and those of another, so ably illustrated by Locke, taught the christians of that time to render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Instructed to yield obedience to princes for conscience' sake, they were not the less orderly or submissive because they declined their interference in the suppression of error, or the punishment of ecclesiastical delinquency. If there be that inseparable connexion between political disaffection and the exercise of popular rights in religion which this writer contends, the primitive christians must have been in a deplorable state; since it would have been impossible for them to quiet the just apprehensions of government without placing a heathen emperor at the

head of the church. What must we think of the knowledge of a writer who was ignorant of these facts; of the candour which suppressed them; or of the humanity which finds an occasion of aspersing his fellow-christians in what escaped the malignity of heathen persecutors!

The dissenters will not fail to remind the writer, that the British is a mixed, not an absolute monarchy; that the habit of considering the people as nothing is as repugnant to its spirit as that of making them every thing; and that to vest the whole power in the hands of one person, without check or control, is more suited to the genius of the Turkish than of the British government. And to this retort, it must be confessed, the conduct of the high-church party, who have seldom scrupled to promulgate maxims utterly subversive of liberty, would lend a very colourable support. The whole topic, however, is invidious, absurd, and merely calculated to mislead; since the constitution of the christian church is fixed by the will of its Founder, the dictates of which we are not at liberty to accommodate or bend to the views of human policy. The dispute respecting ecclesiastical government must, like every other on religion, be determined, if it ever be determined at all, by an appeal to scripture, illustrated, perhaps, occasionally by the approved usages of the earliest antiquity. To connect political consequences with it, and to make it the instrument of exciting popular odium, is the indication of a bad cause and of a worse heart. After the specimens our readers have already had of the author's spirit, they will not be surprised to find that he is not quite satisfied with the Toleration Act, which he complains, has been perverted from its purpose of affording relief to tender consciences to that of *making* dissenters. We are not acute enough to comprehend this distinction. We have always supposed that it was the intention of the legislature, by that act, to enable protestant dissenters to worship where they pleased, after giving proper notice to the magistrate: how their availing themselves of this liberty can be construed into an abuse of the act, we are at a loss to con-

ceive. This writer would tolerate dissenters, but not allow them to propagate their sentiments; that is, he would permit them the liberty of thinking which none can restrain, but not of speaking and acting, which are alone subject to the operation of law.

It is quite of a piece with the narrow prejudices of such a man, to complain of it as an intolerable hardship, that a minister of the establishment is sometimes in danger, through the undistinguishing spirit of hospitality, of being invited to sit down with religionists of different descriptions: and he avows his manly resolution of going without his dinner rather than expose himself to such an indignity. It is certainly a most lamentable thing to reflect, that a regular clergyman may possibly lose *caste* by mixing at the hospitable board with some of those who will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. When Burke was informed that Mr. Godwin held gratitude to be a crime, he replied, "I will take care not to be accessory to his committing that crime." We hope the lovers of hospitality will take the hint, and never insult the author of "Zeal without Innovation" by exposing him to the touch of the ceremonially unclean.

Although we have already trespassed on the patience of our readers, we cannot dismiss this part of the subject without craving their indulgence a little longer. We are much concerned to witness the spirit of intolerance that pervades many recent publications. If the uniform course of experience can prove any thing, it is, that the extension of any particular frame of church government will of itself contribute little to the interests of vital christianity. Suppose every inhabitant of the kingdom were to return to the bosom of the establishment to-morrow; what real accession would be gained to the kingdom of Christ? Is there any magic in the change of a name, which can convert careless, profane, irreligious dissenters into devout and pious churchmen? The virtuous part of them do honour to the christian profession in the situation they occupy at present; and for the vicious, they could only infect and disgrace the community with which they proposed to associate. What means this incessant struggle

to raise one party on the ruins of another; this assumption of infallibility, and the clamorous demand for the interposition of the legislature, which we so often witness? If the writers to whom we allude will honestly tell us they are apprehensive of their "craft" being in danger, we will give them credit for sincerity; but to attempt to cover their bigotry under a mask of piety, is too gross a deception. Were the measures adopted for which these men are so violent, they would scarcely prove more injurious to religion than to the interests of the established church; to which the accession of numbers would be no compensation for the loss of that activity and spirit which are kept alive by the neighbourhood of rival sects. She would suffer rapid encroachments from infidelity; and the indolence and secularity too incident to opulent establishments would hasten her downfal. Amidst the increasing degeneracy of the clergy, which must be the inevitable effect of destroying the necessity of vigilance and exertion, the people that now crowd the conventicle would not repair to the church: they would be scattered and dissipated, like water no longer confined within its banks. In a very short time, we have not the smallest doubt, the attendance at church would be much less than it is now. A religion which, by leaving no choice, can produce no attachment,—a religion invested with the stern rigour of law, and associated in the public mind, and in public practice, with prisons and pillories and gibbets,—would be a noble match, to be sure, for the subtle spirit of impiety, and the enormous and increasing corruption of the times. It is amusing to reflect what ample elbow-room the worthy rector would possess; how freely he might expatiate in his wide domain; and how much the effect of his denunciations against schism would be heightened by echoing through so large a void.

"Hic vasto rex Æolus antro
Luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras
Imperio premit."

The Gallican church, no doubt, looked upon it as a signal triumph, when she prevailed on Louis the Four-

teenth to repeal the edict of Nantes, and to suppress the protestant religion. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look, after this period, for her Fenelons and her Pascals—where for the distinguished monuments of piety and learning which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived she had no occasion for it, when there was no lustre of christian holiness surrounding her; nor for learning, when she had no longer any opponents to confute, or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious as she pleased; and, amidst the silence and darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains and retired to rest. The accession of numbers she gained by suppressing her opponents, was like the small extension of length a body acquires by death: the feeble remains of life were extinguished, and she lay a putrid corpse, a public nuisance, filling the air with pestilential exhalations. Such, there is every reason to believe, would be the effect of similar measures in England. That union among christians, which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit, to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety, among all sects and parties, will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably; to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree; and, in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, every one will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. An awful fear of God, and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind, will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will strangely illuminate the path in which they are to tread. In the room of being repelled

by mutual antipathy, they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A larger measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them from converting every incidental variation into an impassable boundary; or from condemning the most innocent and laudable usages for fear of symbolizing with another class of christians—an odious spirit with which the writer under consideration is strongly impregnated. The general prevalence of piety in different communities, would inspire that mutual respect, that heartfelt homage for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret, Why cannot we be one? What is it that obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontiers of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles, in which all concur.

To this we may add, that a more perfect subjection to the authority of the great Head of the church would restrain men from inventing new terms of communion, from lording it over conscience, or from exacting a scrupulous compliance with things which the word of God has left indifferent. That sense of imperfection we ought ever to cherish would incline us to be looking up for superior light, and make us think it not improbable that, in the long night which has befallen us, we have all more or less mistaken our way, and have much to learn and much to correct. The very idea of identifying a particular party with the church would be exploded; the foolish clamour about schism hushed; and no one, however mean and inconsiderable, be expected to surrender his conscience to the claims of ecclesiastical dominion. The New Testament is surely not so obscure a book, that, were its contents to fall into the hands of a hundred serious, impartial men, it would produce such opposite conclusions as must necessarily issue in their forming two or more separate communions. It is re-

markable, indeed, that the chief points about which real christians are divided, are points on which that volume is silent—mere human fabrications, which the presumption of men has attached to the christian system. A larger communication of the Spirit of truth would insensibly lead christians into a similar train of thinking; and being more under the guidance of that infallible Teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one communion would probably be productive of much mischief: it certainly would do no sort of good, since it would be the mere result of intolerance and pride, acting upon indolence and fear.

During the present disjointed state of things, then, nothing remains but for every one to whom the care of any part of the church of Christ is intrusted, to exert himself to the utmost in the promotion of vital religion, in cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing, with a firm and steady hand, the heats and eruptions of party spirit. He will find sufficient employment for his time and his talents in inculcating the great truths of the gospel, and endeavouring to "form Christ" in his hearers, without blowing the flames of contention, or widening that breach which is already the disgrace and calamity of the christian name. Were our efforts uniformly to take this direction, there would be an *identity* in the impression made by religious instruction; the distortion of party features would gradually disappear; and christians would every where approach towards that ideal beauty spoken of by painters, which is combined of the finest lines and traits conspicuous in individual forms. Since they have all drunk into the same spirit, it is manifest nothing is wanting but a larger portion of that spirit, to lay the foundation of a solid, cordial union. It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interest, the love of power, and the want of reverence for truth, not to the obscurities of revelation, we must impute the unhappy contentions among christians—maladies, which nothing can correct

but deep and genuine piety. The true *schismatic* is not so properly the person who declines a compliance with what he judges to be wrong, though he may be mistaken in that judgement, as the man who, like the author before us, sedulously employs every artifice to alienate the affections of good men from each other.

Having animadverted on the illiberality of this writer towards persons of different persuasions, we now proceed to notice his misrepresentations of the state of religion, together with his treatment of that description of the clergy with whom he has been accustomed to associate.

The cause of religion he represents as in a very declining state.

"Some persons now living," he says, "can remember "the time, when absence from church was far from "being so common as it is now become. Then, the "more considerable heads of families were generally "seen in the house of God, with their servants as well "as children. This visible acknowledgement of the "importance of religion had a good effect on families of "inferior condition: the presence of the merchant and "his household brought the tradesman and his family; "and the example of the latter induced his journeymen "and out-door servants to come to church. But this is "not a description of modern habits. In many pews, "once regularly filled by the entire household to which "they belonged, it is now common to see only a small "portion of the family, and often not an individual. "Two or three of the younger branches, from the female "side of the house, occasionally attend, with, perhaps, "the mother, but without the father and the sons: the "father, wearied with business, wants a little relaxa-"tion; and to the young men, not suspecting their "want of instruction, a rural excursion offers some-"thing interesting, while the tranquil service of a church "is too tame an occupation for their unexhausted spirits. "Nor among the few who attend public worship are "they always the same individuals that we see in the "house of God. So that it does not appear to be "from steady principle, and still less from the influ-

" ence of parental authority, that some of the family " are occasionally there. The children are left to themselves; they may go to church if they choose to do " so; they incur no displeasure from the father, they " excite no grief in his bosom, if they stay away. " There is no disreputation attaching to absence. It " falls rather upon the contrary conduct; any uniform " attendance on divine worship being frequently consi- " dered a mark of imbecility or demureness.

" To account for the thinness of our parochial con- " gregations, some allege that there is not a sufficient " quantity of naturally attractive circumstances in the " ordinary service of the church. But it is observable, " that where our liturgy is used in its *grandest* form, " the attendance is as far from being numerous as it is " elsewhere. It might be expected, and especially in " an age in which a taste for *music* so generally prevails, " that in a metropolis containing near a million of inha- " bitants, there might be more persons drawn by the " grandeur of cathedral worship to the place where it is " performed, than could well be accommodated in one " church. The cathedral of London, however, pre- " sents no such scene. With a numerous attendance of " ministers, the finest specimens of church-music, " and these performed with that effect which profes- " sional qualification gives to such compositions, the " seats of St. Paul's cathedral are seldom half filled."— Pp. 2—4.

Though we acknowledge the truth of his statement in a great measure, we are far from drawing from it the inference he wishes to impress. Whenever places of worship are thinly attended, at least in the established church, we have uniformly found it to proceed from a cause very distinct from the general decay of piety; it results from the absence of that sort of instruction which naturally engages the attention and fixes the heart. In one view, we are fully aware a great alteration has taken place: an attachment to the mere forms of religion has much subsided; the superstitious reverence formerly paid to consecrated places and a pompous ceremonial

has waxed old; so that nothing will now command a full attendance at places set apart for divine worship but the preaching of the gospel, or of something, at least, that may be mistaken for it. Instead of concurring with the author in considering this as evincing the low state of christianity amongst us, we are disposed to look upon it in a contrary light, being fully convinced that a readiness to acquiesce in the mere forms and ceremonies of religion, to the neglect of that truth which sanctifies the church, is one of the most dangerous errors to which men can be exposed. There is something in the constitution of human nature so abhorrent from the absence of all religion, that we are inclined to believe more are ruined by embracing some counterfeit instead of the true, than by the rejection of true and false altogether. We are not sorry, therefore, to learn, that the music at St. Paul's is not found a sufficient substitute for " the joyful sound," nor a numerous show of ministers accepted by the people, in the room of " Christ crucified set forth before them." Let the truths which concern men's eternal salvation be faithfully taught in that noble edifice, and the complaint of slender attendance will soon cease. In the mean time, of that part of the citizens who might be expected to frequent the cathedral, some are too gay and fashionable not to prefer the music of the theatre and the opera; and some are serious christians, whose hunger for the bread of life will not be satisfied or diverted by the symphonies of an organ, or the splendour of canonical dresses.

He who is resolved to see nothing but what grows in his own inclosure, may report that " all is barren," though the fields around him bloom like the garden of Eden; and such is the strength of this writer's prejudices, that it is morally impossible for him to give a just representation of facts. In forming his estimate of the state of religion, he is resolved to look only where he knows nothing is to be seen: and absurdly complains of the want of a crop where he is conscious the soil has never been cultivated. Effects must be looked for from their natural causes: men do not gather grapes of thorns,

or figs of thistles; nor are the fruits of christianity to be expected in the absence of the gospel. Notwithstanding this writer's gloomy prognostications, we have no doubt of the kingdom of Christ making sensible advances; and, in support of this opinion, we adduce the wider extension of religious truth, the multitude of places where the gospel is preached in its purity, the general disposition to attend it, the establishment of Sunday schools, the circulation, with happy effect, of innumerable tracts, the translation of the Scriptures into foreign languages, and their more extensive communication to all nations, the formation of missionary societies, the growing unanimity among christians, and the prodigious increase of faithful ministers in the established church. We presume these facts may be allowed a degree of weight, sufficient to overbalance the thin attendance at St. Paul's. It is not a little surprising that a writer, who professes to exhibit a correct idea of the religious state of the nation, should pay no attention to these circumstances, or content himself with alluding to them in terms expressive of chagrin and vexation. Regarding the extensive institutions, and the diffusive benefits, which the efforts of serious christians in different connexions have produced, as a contraband article, not entitled to be mentioned in the estimate of our moral worth, he represents us as generally sunk in spiritual sloth and poverty. We should not learn from this writer that attempts were making for the universal propagation of christianity; that translations of the Scriptures were going on in different languages; or that a zeal for the conversion of pagans had occasioned a powerful reaction at home, by producing efforts, hitherto unexampled, toward carrying the gospel into the darkest corners of the kingdom. We should never suspect, from reading his work, that any material alteration had taken place within the last fifty years, or that new life had been infused into the professing world beyond what we might conjecture, perhaps, from certain indirect references and dark insinuations. Without noticing these facts, he calls upon us to join in pathetic lamentations over the prostrate state of religion, upon no better ground than the neglect of places of worship where the gospel is *not* preached, and where there is little to attract attention beside the privilege of hearing *fine music* and seeing *fine ministers* for nothing. It is a consolation to us to be convinced that the state of things is much otherwise than he represents; that more persons are brought acquainted with the glad tidings of the gospel, and more minds penetrated with the concerns of eternity, than at any period since the Reformation.

Thus far we dispute the justice of this author's statement, and are disposed to question the truth of the inference he has drawn from some insulated facts. But this is not the only fault we have to find with this part of his work. He has not only, in our opinion, been betrayed into erroneous conclusions, but has utterly failed in catching the distinguishing features in the aspect of the times; so that his picture bears no sort of resemblance to the original. He has painted nothing; he has only given an account of a particular distortion or two; so that a foreigner would no more be able, by reading his work, to form an idea of the state of religion in England, than of a countenance he had never seen, by being told its chin was too long, or its nostrils were too wide. It must be evident to every one, that the most striking characteristic of the present times, is the violent, the outrageous opposition that is made to religion by multitudes, and the general disposition in the members of the community to take a decided part. To this circumstance the writer has never adverted. It is impossible to suppose it could escape his attention: we must therefore impute his silence to the well-weighed dictates of prudence, which admonished him of the possibility of betraying himself into inconveniences by such a discussion: nor need we be surprised, notwithstanding his boasted magnanimity, at his yielding to these suggestions; since his magnanimity is of that sort, which makes a man very ready to insult his brethren, but very careful not to disgust his superiors. As we are happily exempt from these scruples, we shall endeavour, in as few words as

possible, to put the reader in possession of our ideas on this subject.

The leading truths of revelation were all along retained in the church of Rome, but buried under such a mass of absurd opinions and superstitious observances, that they drew but little attention, and exerted a very inconsiderable influence in the practical application of the system. At the Reformation, they were effectually extricated and disengaged from errors with which they had been mingled, were presented in a blaze of light, and formed the basis of our national creed. As it was by pushing them to their legitimate consequences that the Reformers were enabled to achieve the conquest of popery, they were for a while retained in their purity, and every deviation from them denounced as menacing a revolt to the enemy. The Articles of the church were a real transcript of the principles the Reformers were most solicitous to inculcate; and, being supported by the mighty impulse which produced the Reformation, while that remained fresh and unbroken they constituted the real faith of the people. Afterwards they underwent an eclipse in the protestant church of England, as they had done in the church of Rome, though from causes somewhat different. The low arminianism and intolerant bigotry of Laud paved the way for a change, which was not a little aided and advanced by the unbounded licentiousness and profligacy which overspread the kingdom after the Restoration: for it must be remembered that there is an intimate connexion between the perception and relish of truth and a right disposition of mind; that they have a reciprocal influence on each other; and that the mystery of faith can only be placed with safety in a pure conscience. When lewdness, profaneness, and indecency, reigned without control, and were practised without a blush, nothing, we may be certain, could be more repugnant to the prevailing taste, than the unadulterated word of God. There arose also, at that time, a set of divines who, partly in compliance with the popular humour, partly to keep at a distance from the puritans, and partly to gain the infidels, who then began to make

their appearance, introduced a new sort of preaching, in which the doctrines of the Reformation, as they are usually styled, were supplanted by copious and elaborate disquisitions on points of morality. Their fame and ability imboldened their successors to improve upon their pattern, by consigning the Articles of the church to a still more perfect oblivion, by losing sight still more entirely of the peculiarities of the gospel, guarding more anxiously against every sentiment or expression that could agitate or alarm, and by shortening the length, and adding as much as possible to the dryness, of their moral lucubrations. From that time, the idea commonly entertained in England of a perfect sermon, was that of a discourse upon some moral topic, clear, correct, and argumentative, in the delivery of which the preacher must be free from all suspicion of being moved himself, or of intending to produce emotions in his hearers; or in a word, as remote as possible from such a mode of reasoning on righteousness, temperance, and judgement, as should make a Felix tremble. This idea was very successfully realized, this singular model of pulpit eloquence carried to the utmost perfection; so that, while the bar, the parliament, and the theatre, frequently agitated and inflamed their respective auditories, the church was the only place where the most feverish sensibility was sure of being laid to rest. This inimitable apathy in the mode of imparting religious instruction, combined with the utter neglect of whatever is most touching or alarming in the discoveries of the gospel, produced their natural effect of extinguishing devotion in the established church, and of leaving it to be possessed by the dissenters; of whom it was considered as the distinguishing badge, and from that circumstance derived an additional degree of unpopularity. From these causes the people gradually became utterly alienated from the Articles of the church, eternal concerns dropped out of the mind, and what remained of religion was confined to an attention to a few forms and ceremonies. If any exception can be made to the justice of these observations, it respects the doctrines of the Trinity and the atone-

ment, which were often defended with ability, though in a dry and scholastic manner, and the discussion of which served to mark the return of the principal festivals of the church; while other points not less important,—such as the corruption of human nature, the necessity of the new birth, and justification by faith,—were either abandoned to oblivion, or held up to ridicule and contempt. The consequence was, that the creed established by law had no sort of influence in forming the sentiments of the people; the pulpit completely vanquished the desk; piety and puritanism were confounded in one common reproach; an almost pagan darkness in the concerns of salvation prevailed; and the English became the most irreligious people upon earth.

Such was the situation of things, when Whitfield and Wesley made their appearance; who, whatever failings the severest criticism can discover in their character, will be hailed by posterity as the second Reformers of England. Nothing was farther from the views of these excellent men, than to innovate in the established religion of their country; their sole aim was to recall the people to the good old way, and to imprint the doctrine of the Articles and Homilies on the spirits of men. But this doctrine had been confined so long to a dead letter, and so completely obliterated from the mind by contrary instruction, that the attempt to revive it met with all the opposition which innovation is sure to encounter, in addition to what naturally results from the nature of the doctrine itself, which has to contend with the whole force of human corruption. The revival of the old appeared like the introduction of a new religion; and the hostility it excited was less sanguinary, but scarcely less virulent, than that which signalized the first publication of christianity. The gospel of Christ, or that system of truth which was laid as the foundation of the Reformation, has since made rapid advances; and, in every step of its progress, has sustained the most furious assault. Great Britain exhibits the singular spectacle of two parties contending, not whether christianity shall be received or rejected, but whether it shall be allowed to

retain any thing spiritual: not whether the Articles and Homilies shall be repealed, but whether they shall be laid as the basis of public instruction. Infidelity being too much discredited by the atrocities in France, to hope for public countenance, the enemies of religion, instead of attacking the outworks of christianity, are obliged to content themselves with vilifying and misrepresenting its distinguishing doctrines. They are willing to retain the christian religion, providing it continue inefficient; and are wont to boast of their attachment to the established church, when it is manifest there is little in it they admire, except its splendour and its emoluments. The clerical order, we are sorry to say, first set the example; and, since evangelical principles have been more widely diffused, have generally appeared in the foremost ranks of opposition. This is nothing more than might be naturally looked for. With all the respect we feel for the clergy, on account of their learning and talents, it is impossible not to know that many of them are mere men of the world, who have consequently the same objections to the gospel as others, together with some peculiar to themselves. As the very attempt of reviving doctrines which have been obliterated through their neglect, implies a tacit censure of their measures, so, wherever that attempt succeeds, it diminishes the weight of their ecclesiastical character. Deserted by the people, and eclipsed in the public esteem by many much their inferiors in literary attainments, they feel indignant: and if, as we will suppose, they sometimes suspect their being neglected has arisen from their inattention to important truths and indispensable duties, this increases their uneasiness, which, if it fails to reform, will inevitably exasperate them still more against those who are the innocent occasions of it. It is but fair to acknowledge, that, in conducting the controversy, they have generally kept within decent bounds, have often reasoned where others have railed, and have usually abstained from topics hackneyed by infidels and scoffers. But they cannot be vindicated from the charge of having, by a formal opposition to the gospel, inflamed the irreligious prejudices of the age, ob-

structed the work they were appointed to promote, and imboldened others, who had none of their scruples or restraints, to outrage piety itself. The dragon has cast from his mouth such a flood of heresy and mischief, that Egypt, in the worst of her plagues, was not covered with more loathsome abominations. Creatures, which we did not suspect to have existed, have come forth from their retreats, some soaring into the regions of impiety on vigorous pinions, others crawling on the earth with a slow and sluggish motion, only to be tracked through the filthy slime of their impurities. We have seen writers of every order, from the Polyphemuses of the north to the contemptible dwarfs of the Critical Review; men of every party, infidels, churchmen, and dissenters, — a motley crew, who have not one thing in common, except their antipathy to religion,—join hands and heart on this occasion: a deadly taint of impiety has blended them in one mass; as things the most discordant, while they are *living* substances, will do perfectly well to putrefy together.

We are not at all alarmed at this extensive combination; we doubt not of its producing the most happy effects. It has arisen from the alarm the great enemy has felt at the extension of the gospel; and, by drawing the attention of the world more powerfully to it, will ultimately aid the cause it is intended to subvert. The public will not long be at a loss to determine where the truth lies, when they see in one party a visible fear of God, a constant appeal to his oracles, a solicitude to promote the salvation of mankind; in the other, an indecent levity, an unbridled insolence, an unblushing falsehood, a hard unfeeling pride, a readiness to adopt any principles and assume any mask that will answer their purpose, together with a manifest aim to render the Scriptures of no authority, and religion of no effect.

Having so often alluded to the "evangelical clergy," we shall close this division of our remarks with exhibiting a slight outline of the doctrines by which the clergy of this class are distinguished. The term *evangelical* was first given them, simply on account of their preaching the gospel, or, in other words, their exhibiting with clearness and precision the peculiar truths of christianity. In every system there are some principles which serve to identify it, and in which its distinguishing essence consists. In the system of christianity, the rules of moral duty are not entitled to be considered in this light, partly because they are not peculiar to it, and partly because they are retained by professed infidels, who avow, without scruple, their admiration of the morality of the gospel. We must look, then, elsewhere, for the distinguishing character of christianity. It must be sought for in its doctrines, and, as its professed design is to conduct men to eternal happiness, in those doctrines which relate to the way of salvation, or the method of a sinner's reconciliation with God. There are some, we are aware, who would reduce the whole faith of a christian to a belief of the Messiahship of Christ, without reflecting that, until we have fixed some specific ideas to the term Messiah, the proposition which affirms him to be such contains no information. The most discordant apprehensions are entertained by persons who equally profess that belief; some affirming him to be a mere man, others a being of the angelic order, and a third party that he essentially partakes of the divine nature. The first of these look upon his sufferings as merely exemplary; the last, as propitiatory and vicarious. It must be evident, then, from these views being at the utmost distance from each other, that the proposition that Christ is the Messiah conveys little information, while the import of its principal term is left vague and undetermined. The socinian and trinitarian, notwithstanding their verbal agreement, having a different object of worship, and a different ground of confidence, must be allowed to be of different religions. It requires but a very cursory perusal of the Articles of the established church, to determine to which of these systems *they* lend *their* support: or to perceive that the Deity of Christ, the doctrine of atonement for sin, the guilt and apostacy of man, and the necessity of the agency of the Spirit to restore the divine image, are asserted by them in terms the most clear and unequivocal.

This question stands quite independent of the calvinistic controversy. Are the clergy, styled evangelical, to be blamed for preaching *these* doctrines? Before this can be allowed, the Articles must be cancelled by the same authority by which they were established; or it must be shown how it consists with integrity, to gain an introduction to the church by signifying an unfeigned assent and consent to certain articles of religion, with the intention of immediately banishing them from notice. The clamour against the clergy in question cannot, without an utter contempt of decency, be excited by the mere fact of their being known to hold and inculcate these doctrines; but by the manner of their teaching them, or the exclusive attention they are supposed to pay them, to the neglect of other parts of the system. The measure of zeal they display for them, they conceive to be justified, as well by a view of the actual state of human nature, as by the express declaration of the inspired oracles. Conceiving, with the compilers of the Articles, that the state of man is that of a fallen and apostate creature, they justly conclude that a mere code of morals is inadequate to his relief; that, having lost the favour of God by his transgression, he requires, not merely to be instructed in the rules of duty, but in the method of regaining the happiness he has forfeited: that the pardon of sin, or some compensation to divine justice for the injury he has done to the majesty of the supreme Lawgiver, are the objects which ought, in the first place, to occupy his attention. An acquaintance with the rules of duty may be sufficient to teach an innocent creature how to secure the felicity he possesses, but can afford no relief to a guilty conscience, nor instruct the sinner how to recover the happiness he has lost. Let it be remembered, that christianity is essentially a restorative dispensation; it bears a continual respect to a state from which man is fallen, and is a provision for repairing that ruin which the introduction of moral evil has brought upon him. Exposed to the displeasure of God and the curse of his law, he stands in need of a Redeemer; disordered in his powers, and criminally averse to his duty, he equally needs a Sanctifier.

As adapted to such a situation, much of the New Testament is employed in displaying the character and unfolding the offices of both, with a view of engaging him to embrace that scheme of mercy which the divine benignity has thought fit to exhibit in the gospel. The intention of St. John, in composing the evangelical history, coincides with the entire purpose and scope of revelation: "These things are written," said he, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." Whoever considers that, upon every hypothesis except the socinian, christianity is a provision of mercy for an apostate and sinful world, through a divine Mediator, will acknowledge that something more is included in the idea of preaching the gospel, than the inculcation of moral duties; and that he who confines his attention to these, exchanges the character of a christian pastor for that of a fashionable declaimer, or a philosophical moralist. If we turn our eyes to the ministry of the apostles, we perceive it to have consisted in "testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:" repentance, which is natural religion modified by the circumstances of a fallen creature, including a return to the path of duty; and faith, which is a practical compliance with the christian dispensation, by receiving the Saviour as "the way, the truth, and the life." Faith and repentance being the primary duties enjoined under the gospel, and the production of these the professed end of the inspired writers, we need not wonder that those who are ambitious to tread in their steps, insist much, in the course of their ministry, on the topics which supply the principal motives to these duties; the evil of sin, the extent of human corruption, together with the dignity, power, and grace of the Redeemer. Remembering that the object of repentance is God, they do not, in treating of sin, satisfy themselves with displaying its mischievous effects in society: they expatiate on its contrariety to the divine nature; they speak of it chiefly as an affront offered to the authority of the Supreme Ruler; and represent no repentance as genuine which springs not from godly

sorrow, or a concern for having displeased God. In this part of their office they make use of the moral law, which requires the devotion of the whole heart and unfailing obedience, as the sword of the Spirit, to pierce the conscience and to convince men that "by the deeds of it no flesh living can be justified, but that every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God." The uniform course of experience serves to convince them, that, till a deep impression of this truth be made on the heart, the character of the Saviour, and the promise of pardon through his blood, will produce no gratitude, and excite no interest. In inculcating faith in Christ, they cannot satisfy themselves with merely exhibiting the evidences of christianity; a mere assent to which, upon historical grounds, undeniably fails, in innumerable instances, of producing those effects which are uniformly ascribed to that principle in the New Testament; neither overcoming the world, nor purifying the heart, nor inducing newness of life. They are of opinion that the external evidences of the christian religion are chiefly of importance, on account of their tendency to fix the attention on Christ, the principal object exhibited in that dispensation; and the faith on which the Scriptures lay so much stress, and connect with such ineffable benefits, they conceive essentially to involve a personal reliance on Christ for salvation, accompanied with a cordial submission to his authority. Attempting to produce this scriptural faith, in a dependence upon the divine blessing, (without which the best means will be unsuccessful,) they dwell much on the dignity of his character as the Son of God, the admirable constitution of his person as "Immanuel, God with us," the efficacy of his atonement, and the gracious tenour of his invitations, together with the agency of that Spirit which is entrusted to him as the Mediator, to be imparted to the members of his mystical body. In their view, to preach the Gospel is to preach Christ; they perceive the New Testament to be full of him: and while they imbibe that spirit with which it is replete, they feel a sacred ambition to diffuse "the savour of his name in every place."

Let it not be inferred from hence, that they are inattentive to the interests of practical religion, or that their ministry is merely occupied in explaining and enforcing a doctrinal system. None lay more stress on the duties of a holy life, or urge with more constancy the necessity of their hearers showing their faith by their works; and they are incessantly affirming, with St. James, that the former without the latter "is dead, being alone." Though, in common with the inspired writers, they ascribe their transition from a state of death to a state of justification solely to faith in Christ previous to good works actually performed, yet they equally insist upon a performance of those works as the evidence of justifying faith; and, supposing life to be spared, as the indispensable condition of final happiness. The law, not altered in its requirements, (for what was once duty they conceive to be duty still,) but attempered in its sanctions to the circumstances of a fallen creature, they exhibit as the perpetual standard of rectitude, as the sceptre of majesty by which the Saviour rules his disciples. They conceive it to demand the same things, though not with the same rigour, under the gospel dispensation as before. The matter of duty they look upon as unalterable, and the only difference to be this; that, whereas, under the covenant of works, the condition of life was sinless obedience, under the new covenant, an obedience sincere and affectionate, though imperfect, is accepted for the sake of the Redeemer. At the same time they do not cease to maintain, that the faith which they hold to be justifying comprehends in it the seminal principle of every virtue; that if genuine, it will not fail to be fruitful; and that a christian has it in his power to show his faith "*by his works*," and by no other means. Under a full conviction of the fallen state of man, together with his moral incapacity to do what is pleasing to God, they copiously insist on the agency of the Spirit, and affectionately urge their hearers to implore his gracious assistance. From *no class* of men will you hear more solemn warnings against sin, more earnest calls to repentance, or more full and distinct delineations of the duties resulting from every

relation in life, accompanied with a peculiar advantage of drawing from the mysteries of the gospel the strongest motives to strengthen the abhorrence of the one, and enforce the practice of the other. In their hands, morality loses nothing but the pagan air with which it is too often invested. The morality which they enjoin is of heavenly origin, the pure emanation of truth and love, sprinkled with atoning blood, and baptized into an element of christian sanctity. That they are not indifferent to the interests of virtue is sufficiently apparent, from the warm approbation they uniformly express of the excellent work of Mr. Wilberforce, which is not more conspicuous for the orthodoxy of its tenets than for the purity and energy of its moral instruction. If we look at the effects produced from the ministry of these men, they are such as might be expected to result from a faithful exhibition of the truth of God. Wherever they labour, careless sinners are awakened, profligate transgressors are reclaimed, the mere form of religion is succeeded by the power, and fruits of genuine piety appear in the holy and exemplary lives of their adherents. A visible reformation in society at large, and, in many instances, unequivocal proofs of solid conversion, attest the purity of their doctrines and the utility of their labours; effects which we challenge their enemies to produce where a different sort of teaching prevails.

The controversy between them and their opponents, to say the truth, turns on a point of the greatest magnitude: the question at issue respects the choice of a supreme end, and whether we will take "the Lord to be our God." Their opponents are for confining religion to an acknowledgement of the being of a God and the truth of the christian revelation, accompanied with some external rites of devotion, while the world is allowed the exclusive dominion of the heart; *they* are for carrying into effect the apostolic mission by summoning men to repentance, and engaging them to an entire surrender of themselves to the service of God through a Mediator. In the system of human life, their opponents assign to devotion a very narrow and limited agency: *they* contend

for its having the supreme control. The former expect nothing from religion but the restraint of outward enormities by the fear of future punishment; in the views of the latter, it is productive of positive excellence, a perennial spring of peace, purity, and joy. Instead of regarding it as a matter of occasional reference, they consider it as a principle of constant operation. While their opponents always overlook, and frequently deny, the specific difference between the church and the world; in *their* views the christian is a pilgrim and stranger in the earth, one whose heart is in heaven, and who is supremely engaged in the pursuit of eternal realities. Their fiercest opposers, it is true, give to Jesus Christ the title of the Saviour of the world; but it requires very little attention to perceive, that their hope of future happiness is placed on the supposed preponderancy of the virtues over the vices, and the claims which they then conceive to result on the *justice* of God; while the opposite party consider themselves as mere pensioners on *mercy*, flee for refuge to the cross, and ascribe their hopes of salvation entirely to the grace of the Redeemer.

For our parts, supposing the being and perfections of God once ascertained, we can conceive of no point at which we can be invited to stop, short of that serious piety and habitual devotion which the evangelical clergy enforce. To live without religion, to be devoid of habitual devotion, is natural and necessary in him who disbelieves the existence of its object; but upon what principles he can justify his conduct, who professes to believe in a Deity, without aiming to please him in all things, without placing his happiness in his favour, we are utterly at a loss to comprehend.

We cannot dismiss this part of the subject without remarking the exemplary moderation of the clergy of this class on those intricate points which unhappily divide the christian church; the questions, we mean, that relate to predestination and free-will, on which, equally remote from pelagian heresy and antinomian licentiousness, they freely tolerate and indulge a diversity of opinion, embracing calvinists and arminians with little distinction,

provided the calvinism of the former be practical and moderate, and the arminianism of the latter evangelical and devout. The greater part of them lean, we believe, to the doctrine of general redemption, and love to represent the gospel as bearing a friendly aspect toward the eternal happiness of all to whom it is addressed; but they are much less anxious to establish a polemical accuracy than to "win souls to Christ."

The opposition they encounter from various quarters will not surprise those who reflect that "they are not of the world," that "the world loves only its own," and naturally feels a dislike to such as testify that its works are evil. The christianity of the greater part of the community is merely nominal: and it necessarily follows, that wherever the truths of religion are faithfully exhibited and practically exemplified, they will be sure to meet with the same friends and the same enemies as at their first promulgation; they will be still exposed to assault from the prejudices of unrenewed minds, they will be upheld by the same almighty power, and will continue to insinuate themselves into the hearts of the simple and sincere with the same irresistible force.

We hope our readers will excuse the length to which we have extended our delineation of the principles of the clergy styled "evangelical," reflecting how grossly they have been misrepresented, and that until the subject is placed fairly and fully in view, it is impossible to form an equitable judgement of the treatment they have met with from the writer under consideration.

The first charge he adduces against the evangelical clergy is that of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm, according to Mr. Locke, is that state of mind which disposes a person to give a stronger assent to a religious proposition than the evidence will justify. According to the more common and popular notion, it implies a pretence to supernatural communications, on which is founded a belief in certain doctrines, and the performance of certain actions, which the Scriptures have not authorized or revealed—a dangerous delusion, as it tends to disannul the standard of religion, and by the extravagancies and follies it produces,

to bring piety into disgrace. We hold enthusiasm in as much abhorrence as our author does; but we ask, what is the proportion of the evangelical clergy who are guilty of it? and for *every* individual amongst them to whom it attaches, we will engage to produce *ten* amongst their opponents who are deficient in the essential branches of *morality*. Yet we should esteem it extreme illiberality in a writer to brand the clergy in general with immorality. There may be some few, among the many hundreds whom the author has undertaken to describe, who are real enthusiasts; but where is the candour or justice of mingling this feature in the delineation of the body? We appeal to the religious public, whether they are not, on the contrary, eminently conspicuous for their close adherence "to the law and to the testimony," and for their care to enjoin nothing on their hearers without direct warrant from the Bible? If every one is to be charged with enthusiasm whose piety is of a more fervid complexion than the accuser is disposed to sympathize with, or can readily account for, we must indeed despair of convincing this writer of the futility of his allegation. They have the *zeal*, which, to him who makes what is most prevalent in the church his model, *must* look like *innovation*.

He frequently insinuates that there is a disposition in them to symbolize with the dissenters, though he had allowed, at the very outset of his work, that they most strictly conform to the prescribed ritual, have no scruples against canonical obedience, and are most firmly attached to the ecclesiastical constitution. Speaking of the established church, he says—

"They (the evangelical clergy) approve, they admire "the church in which they serve. They rejoice in "being ministers of such a church. Instead of being "indifferent to its continuance, their devoutest wish is, "that it may stand firm on its basis. They consider it "as the greatest of blessings to their country. They "observe, with no little anxiety, separatism gaining "ground upon it. And this, not from an invidious "principle, but because hereby an alienation, *in per-*

" *petuity*, is produced in many minds, from a constitution " which they consider as best providing for the universal " conveyance and permanent publication of christian " truth. Its continuance they likewise consider as the " surest pledge of religious liberty to all who wish for " that blessing. And in this view they pity the short- " sightedness of those religious persons, who forward any " measures which make against the stability of the na- " tional church. They view them as men undermining the " strongest bulwark of *their own* security and comfort, and " conceive that protestant sects, of every name, however " they might prefer their own modes of religion, would de- " voutly pray for the support and prosperity of the church " of England, as it now stands: ' *Sua si bona norint.*' In " short, the ecclesiastical establishment of this country is, " in their views, what ' the ark of God' was in the estima- " tion of the pious Israelite; and ' their hearts tremble' " more for that, than for any thing else, the stability of " which may seem to be endangered in these eventful times. " They would consider its fall as one of the heaviest " judgements that could befall the nation."—Pp. 128, 129.

Any such approach to the dissenters as is inconsistent with their professional engagements is incompatible with the truth of this testimony. But let us go on to notice another imputation.

" I am constantly," says the author, " ready to admit " that there is a great deal of truth in what is often " alleged by their opponents; namely, that under their " preaching there has arisen an unfavourable opinion of " the body of the clergy. To excite a hatred of what is " evil, is, undoubtedly, one purpose of christian instruc- " tion. But while the preacher is attempting this, he must " take care that he do not call forth the malignant passions. " This he is almost sure to do, if he point out a certain " set of men, as persons to whom his reprehensions par- " ticularly apply. The hearers, too generally apt to for- " get themselves, are drawn still further from the con " sideration of their own faults, when they can find a " defined class of men, on whom they can fasten the " guilt of any alleged error; on them they will dis-

" charge their gall, and mistake their rancour for *righteous-* " *ness.*"—Pp. 154, 155, *Second Edition.*

Two questions arise on this point: first, how far an unfavourable opinion of the body of the clergy is just; and secondly, what sort of influence the evangelical party have had in producing it. " The clergy, as a body," the author complains, " are considered by them and their " adherents as men who do not preach the gospel." If we understand him, he means to assert that the clergy, as a body, *do* preach the gospel: for we cannot suspect him of being so ridiculous as to complain of their being considered in their just and true light. Here we have the very singular spectacle of gospel ministers exclaiming with bitterness against some of their brethren for preaching the doctrines of the new birth, justification by faith, the internal operations of the Spirit, and whatever else characterised the faith of the reformers, which we have the satisfaction of learning, from this most liberal writer, are no parts of the gospel. Or, if he demur in assenting to such a proposition, it is incumbent on him to explain what are the *doctrines distinct* from those we have mentioned, the inculcation of which has excited the opposition of the clergy.* We, in our great simplicity, supposed that the ministers styled evangelical had been opposed for insisting on points intimately related to the gospel; but we are now taught, from high authority, that the controversy is entirely of another kind, and relates to subjects, with respect to which the preachers of the gospel may indifferently arrange themselves on either side. We are under great obligations to our author for clearing up this perplexing affair, and so satisfactorily showing both parties they were fighting in the dark. Poor George Whitfield! how much to be pitied! who exhausted himself with incredible labours, and endured a storm of persecution, in communicating religious instruction to people who were already furnished with more than ten thousand preachers of the gospel! To be serious, however, on a subject which, if there be one in the world, demands seriousness,—it is an incontrovertible fact, that the doctrines of the Reformation are no longer heard in the

greater part of the established pulpits, and that there has been a general departure from the truths of the gospel, which are exhibited in the ministry of a small, though increasing, minority of the clergy. The author *knows* this to be a fact, although he has the meanness to express himself in a manner that would imply his being of a contrary opinion. We wish him all the consolation he can derive from this trait of godly simplicity, as well as from his reflection on the effect which his flattery is likely to produce, in awakening the vigilance, and improving the character, of his newly-discovered race of gospel ministers. With respect to the degree in which an unfavourable opinion of the clergy is to be ascribed to the representations of the evangelical party, we have to remark, that they possess too much attachment to their order to delight in depreciating it; and that they are under no temptation to attempt it with a view to secure the preference of their hearers; who, supposing them to have derived benefit from their labours, will be sufficiently aware of the difference between light and darkness, between famine and plenty. Were they to insinuate, with this author, that all their clerical brethren are actually engaged in the same cause, and are promoting the same object with themselves, they would at once be charged with a violation of truth, and be considered as insulting the common sense of the public.

The author is extremely offended at Dr. Haweis, on account of the following passage in his History of the Church of Christ. "Different itinerant societies have been established in order to send instruction to the poor, in the villages where the gospel is not preached. Probably not less than five hundred places of divine worship have been opened within the last three years." Dr. Haweis, in making this representation, undoubtedly conceived himself to be stating a simple fact, without suspecting any lover of the gospel would call it in question. The author's comment upon it is curious enough. "It would "be scarcely credible," he says, "were not the time and "place marked with sufficient precision, that a clergyman, 'beneficed in the Church of England, was describing, in

"the foregoing passage, something which had lately been "taking place in this country!" It is surely very credible that there are five hundred places in England where the gospel is not preached; the incredible part of the business, then, consists in a "beneficed clergyman" daring to assert it, who, according to the author, is a sort of personage who is bound never to utter a truth that will offend the delicate ears of the clergy, especially on so trivial an occasion as that of describing the state of religion in England. What a magnanimity of spirit, and how far is this author from the suspicion of being a man-pleaser!

After acknowledging that the ministers he is characterizing have been *unjustly* charged with infringing on canonical regularity, he adds,

"Would it were as easy to defend them *universally*,* "against those who accuse them of vanity, of courting "popularity, of effrontery, of coarseness, of the want of "that affectionate spirit which should breathe through "all the ministrations of a christian teacher, of their "commonly appearing before a congregation with an "objurgatory aspect, as if their minds were always "brooding over some matter of accusation against their "charge, instead of their feeling towards them as a father "does toward his children."—P. 157.

The reader has, in this passage, a tolerable specimen of the "vanity" and "effrontery" of this writer, as well as of that "objurgatory aspect" he has thought fit to assume toward his brethren, not without strong suspicion of assuming it from a desire to "court popularity." It would be a mere waste of words to attempt to reply to such an accusation, which merits attention on no other account than its exhibiting a true picture of his mind.

"As for the matter," he proceeds to observe, "of which "the sermons delivered by some of them are composed, "it is contemptible in the extreme. Though truths of "great importance are brought forward, yet, as if those "who delivered them were born to ruin the cause in "which they are engaged, they are presented to the

* The word *universally*, marked in italics, was inserted *after* the first edition.

"auditory, associated with such meanness, imbecility, or "absurdity, as to afford a complete triumph to those who "are adverse to their propagation. We are disgusted "by the violation of all the rules, which the common "sense of mankind teaches them to expect the observ- "ance of on the occasion. It is true, indeed, that some- "thing is heard about Christ, about faith and repentance, "about sin and grace; but in vain we look for argument, "or persuasion, or suavity, or reverential demeanour; "qualities which ought never to be absent, where it is "of the utmost importance that the judgement be con- "vinced, and the affections gained."—P. 158.

Unfair and illiberal in the extreme as this representation is, it contains an important concession,—that the lowest preachers among them have the wisdom to make a right selection of topics, and to bring forward truths of great importance; a circumstance sufficient of itself to give them an infinite superiority over the "apes of Epictetus."* A great diversity of talents must be expected to be found amongst them; but it has not been our lot to hear of any, whose labours a good man would think it right to treat with indiscriminate contempt. As they are called, for the most part, to address the middle and lower classes of society, their language is plain and simple: speaking in the presence of God, their address is solemn: and, as becomes "the ambassadors of Christ," their appeals to the conscience are close and cogent. Few, if any, among them, aspire to the praise of consummate orators—a character which we despair of ever seeing associated, in high perfection, with that of a christian teacher. The minister of the gospel is called "to declare the testimony of God," which is always weakened by a profuse employment of the ornaments of secular eloquence. Those exquisite paintings and nice touches of art, in which the sermons of the French preachers excel so much, excite a kind of attention, and produce a species of pleasure, not in perfect accordance with devotional feeling. The imagination is too much excited and employed, not to interfere with the more awful functions of

* Horsley.

conscience; the hearer is absorbed in admiration; and the exercise which ought to be an instrument of conviction, becomes a feast of taste. In the hand of a Massillon, the subject of death itself is blended with so many associations of the most delicate kind, and calls up so many sentiments of natural tenderness, as to become a source of theatrical amusement, rather than of religious sensibility. Without being insensible to the charms of eloquence, it is our decided opinion that a sermon of Mr. Gisborne's is more calculated to "convert a sinner from the error of his way," than one of Massillon's. It is a strong objection to a studied attempt at oratory in the pulpit, that it usually induces a neglect of the peculiar doctrines of christian verity, where the preacher feels himself restrained, and is under the necessity of explaining texts, of obviating objections, and elucidating difficulties, which limits the excursions of imagination, and confines it within narrow bounds. He is, therefore, eager to escape from these fetters; and, instead of "*reasoning out of the Scriptures*," expatiates in the flowery fields of declamation. It would be strange, however, if the evangelical clergy did not excel their contemporaries in the art of preaching, to which they devote so much more of their attention. While others are accustomed to describe it under the very appropriate phrase of "doing duty," it is their business and their delight. They engage in it under many advantages. Possessed of the same education with their brethren, they usually speak to crowded auditories; the truths they deliver command attention; and they are accustomed to ascend the pulpit under an awful sense of the weight and importance of their charge. Under such circumstances, it is next to impossible for them not to become powerful and impressive. Were it not indelicate to mention names, we could easily confirm our observations by numerous living examples. Suffice it to say, that perhaps no denomination of christians ever produced so many excellent preachers; and that it is entirely owing to them, that the ordinance of preaching has not fallen, in the established church, into utter contempt.

With respect to the remarks the author makes on the "hypochondriacal cast of preaching heard among them," of their "holding their hearers by details of conflicts and experiences," and of their "*prosings* on the hidings of God's face,"* we need not detain our readers. To good men it will be matter of serious regret, to find a writer, from whom different things were to be expected, treat the concerns of the spiritual warfare in so light and ludicrous a manner; while the irreligious will heartily join in the laugh. It should be remembered that he is performing quarantine, purging himself from the suspicion of *methodism*, and that nothing can answer this purpose so well as a spice of profaneness.

After expressing his contempt of the evangelical clergy as *preachers*, he proceeds to characterise them in the following manner as *writers*:—

"Here," says he, "I can with great truth affirm, that "many included in that description of clergymen now "under consideration are sorely grieved, by much of "what comes out as the produce of authorship on their "side. And well they may be; to see, as is frequently "the case, the blessed truths of the gospel degraded, by "being associated with newspaper bombast, with impu- "dence, with invective, with dotage, with drivelling cant, "with buffoonery, and scurrility! Who can read these "despicable publications, without thinking contempt- "uously of all who abet them? But let not every one, "in whom an occasional coincidence of opinion may be "recognised, be included in this number. For it is a "certain truth, that the writings of avowed infidels are "not more offensive to several of the clergy in question, "than are some of the publications here alluded to. "Let them not, therefore, be judged of by that which "they condemn; by productions which they consider as "an abuse of the liberty of the press, and a disgrace to "the cause which their authors profess to serve."—P. 179.

Whoever remembers that the most learned interpreter of prophecy now living ranks with the evangelical clergy,

* In the second edition, the author has changed the term "*prosings*" into "*discoursings*."

whoever recalls to his recollection the names of Scott, Robinson, Gisborne, and a multitude of others of the same description, will not easily be induced to form a contemptuous opinion of their literary talents, or to suspect them of being a whit behind the rest of the clergy in mental cultivation or intellectual vigour. In a subsequent edition, the author has explained his meaning, by restricting the censure to all who have ranged themselves *on the side* of the clergy under consideration. But as far as the most explicit avowal of the same tenets can indicate any thing, have not each of the respectable persons before mentioned ranged themselves on their side? Or if he will insist upon limiting the phrase to such as have defended them in controversy, what will he say of Overton, whose work, for a luminous statement of facts, an accurate arrangement of multifarious articles, and a close deduction of proofs, would do honour to the first polemic of the age? In affecting a contempt of this most able writer, he has contradicted himself, having, in another part of his work, borne a reluctant testimony to his talents. He closes his animadversions on the clergy usually styled evangelical, with the following important concessions:—

"We are ready to own, though there have been a few "instances to the contrary, that the moral conduct of the "men in question is consistent with their calling; and "that though the faults above detailed are found among "them, yet that, as a body, they are more than free from "immoralities."—P. 162.

The men to whom their accuser ascribes an assemblage of virtues, so rare and so important, must unquestionably be "the excellent of the earth," and deserve a very different treatment from what they have received at his hands.

Before we put a final period to this article, we must beg the reader's patience to a few remarks on the general tendency of the work under examination.

For the freedom of censure the author has assumed, he cannot plead the privilege of reproof. He has violated every law by which it is regulated. In administering reproof, we are not wont to call in a third party, least

of all the party to whom the persons reproved are directly opposed. Besides, if reproof is intended to have any effect, it must be accompanied with the indications of a friendly mind; since none ever succeeded in reclaiming the person he did not appear to love. The spirit this writer displays toward the objects of his censure, is decidedly hostile; no expressions of esteem, no attempt to conciliate; all is rudeness, asperity, and contempt. He tells us in his preface, "It is difficult to find an apology "for disrespectful language under any circumstances: if "it can be at all excused, it is when he who utters lets "us know from whence it comes; but he who dares to "use it, and yet dares not to put his name to the abuse, "gives us reason to conclude that his cowardice is equal "to his insolence." (Pref. p. iv.) In violation of his own canon, he seems to have assumed a disguise for the very purpose of giving an unbridled indulgence to the insolence he condemns.

If we consider him the light of a public Censor, he will appear to have equally neglected the proprieties of that character. He who undertakes that office ought, in all reason, to direct his chief attention to vice and impiety; which, as the common foes of human nature, give every one the privilege of attack: but, though his subject naturally led him to it, we find little or nothing of the kind. In his eagerness to expose the aberrations of goodness, the most deadly sins, and the most destructive errors, are scarcely noticed. In surveying the state of morals, the eccentricities of a pious zeal, a hairbreadth deviation from ecclesiastical etiquette, a momentary feeling of tenderness towards dissenters, are the things which excite his indignation; while the secularity, the indolence, the ambition, and dissipation, too prevalent in the church, almost escape his observation. We do not mean to assert, that it is always improper to animadvert on the errors and mistakes of good men; we are convinced of the contrary. But, whenever it is attempted, it ought to be accompanied with such expressions of tenderness and esteem, as shall mark our sense of their superiority to persons of an opposite description. In the moral de-

lineations with which the New Testament abounds, when the imperfections of christians are faithfully reprehended, we are never tempted to lose sight of the infinite disparity betwixt the friends and the enemies of the gospel. Our reverence for good men is not impaired by contemplating their infirmities: while those who are strangers to vital religion, with whatever amiable qualities they may be invested, appear objects of pity. The impression made by the present performance is just the reverse. The character of the unquestionably good is placed in so invidious a light on the one hand, and the bad qualities of their opponents so artfully disguised and extenuated on the other, that the reader feels himself at a loss which to prefer. Its obvious tendency is to obliterate every distinctive mark and characteristic by which genuine religion is ascertained.

The writer of this work cannot have intended the reformation of the party on which he has animadverted; for, independently of his having, by the rudeness of his attack, forfeited every claim to their esteem, he has so conducted it, that there is not one in fifty guilty of the faults he has laid to their charge. Instead of being induced to alter their conduct, they can only feel for him those sentiments which unfounded calumny is apt to inspire. The very persons to whom his censures apply, will be more likely to feel their resentment rise at the bitterness and rancour which accompanies them, than to profit by his admonitions.

As we are fully convinced that the controversy agitated between the evangelical party and their opponents, involves the essential interests of the gospel, and whatever renders Christianity worth contending for, we cannot but look with jealousy on the person who offers himself as an umpire; especially when we perceive a leaning towards the party which we consider in the wrong. This partiality may be traced almost through every page of the present work. Were we to look only to speculative points, we might be tempted to think otherwise. It is not, however, in the cool, argumentative parts of a work, that the bias of an author is so much to be perceived, as

in the declamatory parts, when he gives a freer scope to his feelings. It is in the choice of the epithets applied to the respective parties, in the expression of contemptuous or respectful feeling, in the solicitude apparent to please the one, combined with the carelessness of offending the other, that he betrays the state of his heart. Judged by this criterion, this author must be pronounced an *enemy* to the evangelical party. We hope this unnatural alienation from the servants of Christ will not prove contagious, or it will soon completely overthrow that reformation which the established church has experienced within the last fifty years.

When Samson was brought into the house of Dagon to make sport for the Philistines, it was by the Philistines themselves: had it been done by an Israelite, it would have betrayed a blindness much more deplorable than that of Samson. Great as were the irregularities and disorders which deformed the church at Corinth, and severely as they were reprehended, it is easy to conceive, but impossible to express, the indignation Paul would have felt, had a christian held up those disorders to the view and the derision of the heathen world. It is well known that the conduct of Luther, of Carlostadt, and of many other reformers, furnished matter of merited censure, and even of plausible invective; but he who had employed himself in emblazoning and magnifying their faults, would have been deemed a foe to the Reformation. Aware that it will be replied to this, the cases are different, and neither the truth of christianity, nor the doctrines of the Reformation are involved in the issue of the present controversy; we answer, without hesitation, that the controversy now on foot *does* involve nearly all that renders it important for christianity to be true, and most precisely the doctrines of the Reformation, to which the papists are not more inimical (in some points they are less so) than the opponents of the evangelical clergy. It is the old enmity to the gospel, under a new form; an enmity as deadly and inveterate as that which animated the breast of Porphyry or of Julian.

The impression of character on the public mind is

closely connected with that of principles; so that, in the mixed questions more especially which regard religion and morals, it is vain to expect men will condescend to be instructed by those whom they are taught to despise. Let it be generally supposed that the patrons of orthodox piety are weak, ignorant, and enthusiastic, despicable as a body, with the exception of a few individuals; after being inured to such representations from their enemies, let the public be told this by one who was formerly their friend and associate,—and is it possible to conceive a circumstance more calculated to obstruct the efficacy of their principles? Will the prejudices of an irreligious world against the gospel be mitigated, by being inspired with contempt for its abettors? Will it be won to the love of piety, by being schooled in the scorn and derision of its most serious professors?

We can readily suppose, that, stung with the reproaches cast upon his party, he is weary of bearing the cross: if this be the case, let him at once renounce his principles, and not attempt, by mean concessions, and a temporizing policy, to form an impracticable coalition betwixt the world and the church. We apprehend the ground he has taken is untenable, and that he will be likely to please neither party. By the friends of the gospel he will be in danger of being shunned as an "accuser of the brethren;" while his new associates regard him with the contempt due to a sycophant.

It must give the enlightened friends of religion concern, to witness a spirit gaining ground amongst us, which, to speak of it in the most favourable terms, is calculated to sow the seeds of discord. The vivid attention to moral discrimination, the vigilance which seizes on what is deemed reprehensible, is unhappily turned to the supposed failings of good men, much to the satisfaction, no doubt, of an ungodly world. The practice of caricaturing the most illustrious men has grown fashionable amongst us. With grief and indignation we lately witnessed an attempt of this kind on the character of Mr. Whitfield, made, if our information be correct, by the present author; in which every shade of imperfection,

Overton, by a copious detail of facts, and by a series of irrefragable arguments, establishes their innocence: this writer assents to their condemnation, entreating only that execution may be respited till an inquiry is made into the degrees of delinquency. The author of The True Churchman Ascertained, clothes himself with the light of truth: the author of Zeal without Innovation hides himself in the thickest gloom of equivocation.

Before we close this article, we must entreat our reader's patience, while we make one observation relating to the permanence of the ecclesiastical establishment. It is possible the dignitaries of the church may be at a loss to decide whether the services of the evangelical class shall be accepted or rejected; but we are persuaded the people will feel no difficulty in determining whether or not to continue their attendance at the places from whence they are banished. Teachers of the opposite description have already lost their hold on the public mind; and they will lose it more and more. Should the secession from the established church become so general, as that its services are no longer the objects of popular suffrage, it will be deprived of its firmest support. For the author of the Alliance acknowledges that the compact betwixt church and state, which he allows to be a virtual rather than a formal one, rests mainly upon the circumstance of the established religion being that of the majority, without which it becomes incapable of rendering those services to the state, for the sake of which its privileges and emoluments were conferred. Nothing but an extreme infatuation can accelerate such an event. But if pious and orthodox men be prevented from entering into the church, or compelled to retire from it, the people will retire with them; and the apprehension of the church being in danger, which has so often been the watchword of party, will become, for once, well founded.

REVIEW

OF

GISBORNE'S SERMONS.

Sermons, principally designed to illustrate and to enforce Christian Morality. By the Rev. T. GISBORNE, A.M. 8vo. pp. 430. 1809.

WE have read these sermons with so much satisfaction, that, were it in our power to aid their circulation by any testimony of our approbation, we should be almost at a loss for terms sufficiently strong and emphatic. Though the excellent author is possessed already of a large share of the public esteem, we are persuaded these discourses will make a great accession to his celebrity. Less distinguished by any predominant quality than by an assemblage of the chief excellencies in pulpit composition, they turn on subjects not very commonly handled, and discuss them with a copiousness, delicacy, and force, which evince the powers of a master. They are almost entirely upon moral subjects, yet equally remote from the superficiality and dryness with which these subjects are too often treated. The morality of Mr. Gisborne is arrayed in all the majesty of truth and all the beauties of holiness. In perusing these sermons, the reader is continually reminded of real life, and beholds human nature under its most unsophisticated aspect, without ever being tempted to suppose himself in the schools of pagan philosophy. We cannot better explain the professed scope and object of the author, than by copying a few sentences from his preface.

"Of late years it has been loudly asserted, that, "among clergymen who have showed themselves very

" earnest in doctrinal points, adequate regard has not " been evinced to moral instruction. The charge has " perhaps been urged with the greatest vehemence by " persons who have employed little trouble in examining " into its truth. In many cases it has been groundless, " in many, exaggerated. In some instances there has " been reason, I fear, for a degree of complaint; and in " more, a colourable pretext for the imputation. I be- " lieve that some preachers, shocked on beholding exam- " ples, real or supposed, of congregations starving on " mere morality, substituted for the bread of life; eager " to lay broad and deep the foundations of the gospel, " and ultimately apprehensive lest their own hearers " should suspect them of reverting towards *legality*, have " not given to morals, as fruits of faith, the station and " the amplitude to which they have a scriptural claim. " Anxious lest others should mistake, or lest they should " themselves be deemed to mistake, the branch for the " root; not satisfied with proclaiming to the branch, as " they were bound habitually to proclaim, *Thou bearest* " *not the root, but the root thee*, they have shrunk from the " needful office of tracing the ramifications. They have " not left morality out of their discourses, but they have " kept it too much in the back-ground. They have no- " ticed it shortly, generally, incidentally; in a manner " which, while perhaps they were eminent as private " patterns of moral duties, might not sufficiently guard " an unwary hearer against a reduced estimate of prac- " tical holiness, nor exempt themselves from the sus- " picion of undervaluing moral obedience." Pref. pp. vii., viii.

To the truth of these remarks we cordially assent, as they point to a defect in the ministration of some excellent men, which the judicious part of the public have long lamented, and which Mr. Gisborne, in his present work, has taught his contemporaries how to remedy. Extremes naturally lead to each other. The peculiar doctrines of the gospel had been so long neglected by the most celebrated preachers, and the pernicious consequences of that neglect, in wearing out every trace of

genuine religion, had been so deeply felt, that it is not to be wondered at if the first attempts to correct the evil were accompanied with a tendency to the contrary extreme. In many situations, those who attempted to revive doctrines which had long been considered as obsolete, found themselves much in the same circumstances as missionaries, having intelligence to impart before unknown, and exposed to all the contempt and obloquy which assailed the first preachers of christianity. While they were engaged in such an undertaking, it is not at all surprising that they confined their attention almost entirely to the doctrines peculiar to the christian religion, with less care to inculcate and display the moral precepts which it includes in common with other systems than their intrinsic importance demanded. They were too much occupied in removing the rubbish and laying the foundations, to permit them to carry their superstructure very high. They insisted, in general terms, on the performance of moral duties; urged the necessity of that holiness without which "none shall see the Lord;" and, by a forcible application of truth to the conscience, produced in many instances the most surprising, as well as the most happy effects. But still, in consequence of limiting their ministry too much to the first elements of the gospel, and dwelling chiefly on topics calculated to alarm the careless and console the faithful, a wrong taste began to prevail amongst their hearers—a disrelish of moral discussions, a propensity to contemplate christianity under one aspect alone,—that of a system of relief for the guilty, instead of a continual discipline of the heart. Those wished for stimulants and cordials, whose situation required alteratives and correctives. Preachers and hearers have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the fear of being reproached as "*legal*," deterred some good men from insisting so much on moral and practical subjects as their own good sense would have dictated. By this means the malady became more inveterate, till the inherent corruption of human nature converted the doctrine of the gospel, in a greater or less degree, into the leaven of antinomianism.

An error, which at first appeared trivial, at length proved serious; and thus it came to pass that the fabric of sacred truth was almost universally reared in such a manner as to deviate sensibly from the primitive model.

When we look at christianity in the New Testament, we see a set of discoveries, promises, and precepts, adapted to influence the whole character: it presents an object of incessant solicitude, in the pursuit of which new efforts are to be exerted, and new victories accomplished, in a continued course of well-doing, till we reach the heavenly mansions. There is scarce a spring in the human frame and constitution it is not calculated to touch, nor any portion of human agency which is exempted from its control. Its resources are inexhaustible; and the considerations by which it challenges attention embrace whatever is most awful or alluring in the whole range of possible existence. Instead of being allowed to repose on his past attainments, or to flatter himself with the hope of success without the exercise of diligence and watchfulness, the christian is commanded to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. In the *actual* exhibition of religion, the solicitude of serious minds has been made to turn too much on a particular crisis, which has been presented in a manner so insulated, that nothing in the order of means seemed instrumental to its production. In short, things have been represented in such a manner as was too apt to produce despondency before conversion, and presumption after it.

It must be allowed, the judicious management of practical subjects is more difficult than the discussion of doctrinal points; which may also account, in part, for the prevalence of the evil we are now speaking of. In treating a point of doctrine, the habit of belief almost supersedes the necessity of proof: the mind of the hearer is usually pre-occupied in favour of the conclusions to be established; nor is much address or ingenuity necessary to conduct him in a path in which he has long been accustomed to tread. The materials are prepared to the preacher's hands; a set of texts, with their received interpretations, stand ready for his use; the compass of

thought which is required is very limited; and this little circle has been beaten so often, that an ordinary understanding moves through it with mechanical facility. To discuss a doctrinal position to the satisfaction of a common audience requires the smallest possible exertion of intellect. The tritest arguments are, in fact, the best: the most powerful considerations to enforce assent are rendered, by that very quality, the most conspicuous, as the sun announces himself by his superior splendour. In delineating the duties of life the task is very different. To render these topics interesting, it is necessary to look abroad, to contemplate the principles of human nature, and the diversified modes of human feeling and action. The preacher has not to do with a few rigid and unbending propositions: he is to contemplate and portray a real state of things—a state which is continually changing its aspect, while it preserves its essential character, and the particulars of which mock the powers of enumeration. If he does not think with great originality, he must at least think for himself: he must use his own eyes, though he may report nothing but what has been observed before. As there lies an appeal, on these occasions, to the unbiassed good sense and observation of unlettered minds, the deficiencies of an injudicious instructor are sure to be detected. His principles will fail of interesting for want of exemplification, or his details will be devoid of dignity, and his delineations of human life disgust by their deviation from nature and from truth.

In points of casuistry, difficulties will occur which can only be solved and disentangled by nice discrimination, combined with extensive knowledge. The general precepts, for example, of justice and humanity, may be faithfully inculcated, and earnestly insisted on, without affording a ray of useful direction to a doubting conscience. While all men acknowledge the indispensable obligation of these precepts, it is not always easy to discover what is the precise line of action they enforce. In the application of general rules to particular cases of conduct, many relations must be surveyed, opposing claims must be reconciled and adjusted, and the comparative value of

different species of virtue established upon just and solid principles.

These difficulties have been evaded, rather than overcome, by the greater part of moralizing preachers; who have contented themselves with retailing extracts from the works of their celebrated predecessors, or with throwing together a few loose and undigested thoughts on a moral duty, without order and arrangement, or the smallest effort to impress its obligation upon the conscience, or to deduce it from its proper sources. To the total want of unction, to the cold, pagan, anti-christian cast of these compositions, joined to their extreme superficiality, must be ascribed, in a great measure, the disgust which many serious minds have contracted against the introduction of moral topics into the pulpit. Our readers will not suspect we mean to apply this censure indiscriminately, or that we are insensible to the extraordinary merits of a Barrow or of a Tillotson, who have cultivated christian morals with so universal an applause of the English public. We admire, as much as it is possible for our readers to admire, the rich invention, the masculine sense, the exuberantly copious, yet precise and energetic diction, which distinguish the first of these writers, who, by a rare felicity of genius, united in himself the most distinguishing qualities of the mathematician and of the orator. We are astonished at perceiving, in the same person, and in the same composition, the close logic of Aristotle combined with the amplifying powers of Plato. The candour, the good sense, the natural arrangement, the unpremeditated graces of Tillotson, if they excite less admiration, give us almost equal pleasure. It is, indeed, the peculiar boast of the English nation, to have produced a set of divines, who, being equally acquainted with classical antiquity and inspired writ, and capable of joining, to the deepest results of unassisted reason, the advantages of a superior illumination, have delivered down to posterity a body of moral instruction more pure, copious, and exact, than subsists amongst any other people; and had they appealed more frequently to the peculiar principles of the gospel, had they infused a more

evangelical spirit into their discourses, instead of representing christianity too much as a mere code of morals, they would have left us nothing to wish or to regret. Their decision of moral questions was for the most part unquestionably just; but they contemplated moral duties too much apart, neglecting to blend them sufficiently with the motives and principles of pure revelation, after the manner of the inspired writers; and supposing them to believe, they forgot to inculcate, the fundamental truth—that "*by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified.*" Those internal dispositions, whence right conduct can alone flow, were too little insisted on; the agency of the Spirit was not sufficiently honoured or acknowledged; and the subordination of the duties of the second to those of the first table not enough kept in view. The virtues they recommended and enforced were too often considered as the native growth of the human heart, instead of being represented as "*fruits of the Spirit.*" Jesus Christ was not laid as the foundation of morality; and a very sparing use was made of the motives to its practice deduced from his promises, his example, and his sacrifice. Add to this, that the labours of these great men were employed almost entirely in illustrating and enforcing the obligation of particular duties, while the doctrine of the cross engaged little of their attention, except so far as it was impugned by the objections of infidels, or mutilated by the sophistry of papists. From the perusal of their writings, the impression naturally results, that a belief of the evidences of revealed religion, joined to a correct deportment in social life, is adequate to all the demands of christianity. For these reasons, much as we admire, we cannot recommend them in an unqualified manner, nor consider them as safe guides in religion.

By these remarks, we intend no offence to any class of christians. That the celebrated authors we have mentioned, with others of a similar stamp, have refined the style and improved the taste of the English pulpit, while they have poured a copious stream of knowledge on the public mind, we are as ready to acknowledge as their

warmest admirers; but we will not disguise our conviction, that, for the just delineation of the "truth as it is in Jesus," we must look to the Baxters, the Howes, and the Ushers of an earlier period. He who wishes to catch the flame of devotion by listening to the words "which are spirit and are life," will have recourse to the writings of the latter, notwithstanding their intricacy of method and prolixity of style.

It is with peculiar satisfaction we call the attention of our readers to a work which unites, in a considerable degree, the excellencies of each class of divines alluded to, without their defects. The discourses are on the following subjects: Our Lord Jesus Christ the Foundation of Morality; on the Evils resulting from false Principles of Morality; on the Changes produced, by the Coming of Christ, in the Situation of Men as to the Divine Law; Justification not attainable by Acts of Morality; on Living after the Flesh or after the Spirit; the Love of God an Inducement to strict Morality; on Brotherly Love; on the Love of Money; on the Sacrifice of Worldly Interest to Duty; on Christian Bounty; on Discontent; on Worldly Anxiety; on Christian Obedience to Civil Rulers; Christian Patriotism illustrated by the Character of Nehemiah; on quiet Diligence in our Proper Concerns; on Partiality; on Suspicion; on doing Evil to produce Good; on the Superiority of Moral Conduct required of Christians. The reader will perceive it was not the author's design to make a systematic arrangement of christian duties, and that there are many vices and virtues not comprehended within the plan of his present work. In the discussion of the subjects which he has selected, he has evinced much observation of human life, a deep insight into the true principles of morals, and an intimate acquaintance with the genius of the christian religion. He has erected his edifice upon a solid basis; in the choice of his materials, he has carefully excluded the wood, hay, and stubble, and admitted no ornaments but such as are fitted to grace the temple of God.

The intelligent reader will discover, in these discourses,

the advantage resulting from studying morality as a science. It will yield him great satisfaction to find the writer ascending on all occasions to first principles, forming his decision on comprehensive views, separating what is specious from what is solid, and enforcing morality by no motives which are suspicious or equivocal. He will not see vanity or ambition pressed into the service of virtue, or any approach to the adoption of that dangerous policy which proposes to expel one vice by encouraging another. He will meet with no flattering encomiums on the purity and dignity of our nature, none of those appeals to the innate goodness of the human heart, which are either utterly ineffectual, or, if they restrain from open profligacy, diffuse, at the same time, the more subtle poison of pride and self-righteousness. Mr. Gisborne never confounds the functions of morality with the offices of the Saviour, nor ascribes to human virtue, polluted and imperfect at best, any part of those transcendent effects which the New Testament teaches us to impute to the mediation of Christ. He considers the whole compass of moral duties as branches of religion, as prescribed by the will of God, and no farther acceptable to him than as they proceed from religious motives.

The disposition in mankind to seek justification by the works of the law has been so much flattered and encouraged by the light in which moral duties have been usually placed, that Mr. Gisborne has shown his judgement by counteracting this error at the outset. We recommend to the serious attention of our readers, with this view, the fourth sermon, on Justification not attainable by Acts of Morality. We have never seen a publication in which that important argument is set in a more clear and convincing light.

Though Mr. Gisborne for a series of years has distinguished himself as the able opponent of the doctrine of expediency, yet on no occasion has he exerted more ability in this cause than in his present work. We recommend it to the thinking part of the public to forget for a moment that they are reading a sermon, and conceive themselves attending to the arguments of a sober and

enlightened philosopher. To purify the sources of morals, and to detect the principles of a theory, which enables us to err by system and be depraved by rule, is to do good of the highest sort; as he who diminishes the mass of human calamity by striking one from the list of diseases, is a greater benefactor to mankind than the physician who performs the greatest number of cures. It is in this light we look upon the labours of the present author; to whom we are more indebted than to any other individual for discrediting a doctrine, which threatens to annihilate religion, to loosen the foundation of morals, and to debase the character of the nation. We recommend to universal perusal the admirable discourse, on the Evils resulting from false Principles of Morality.

The two discourses which propose to illustrate the Character of Nehemiah contain the most valuable instruction, adapted, in particular, to the use of those who occupy the higher ranks, or who possess stations of commanding influence and authority. They evince just and enlarged views of the duties attached to elevated situations, and breathe the purest spirit of christian benevolence. The Sermon on the Love of Money displays, perhaps, most of the powers of the orator, and demonstrates in how masterly a manner the author is capable, when he pleases, of enforcing "the terrors of the Lord." It contains some awful passages, in which, by a kind of repeated asseveration of the same truth, and the happy reiteration of the same words, an effect is produced resembling that of repeated claps of thunder. We shall present our readers with the following specimen.

"Fourthly. Meditate on the final condition to which "the lover of money is hastening. The *covetous*, the "man who is under the dominion of the love of money, "'shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' In the pre- "sent life he has a foretaste of the fruits of his sin. He "is restless, anxious, dissatisfied; at one time harassed "by uncertainty as to the probable result of his pro- "jects; at another, soured by the failure of them; at an- "other, disappointed in the midst of success, by discern- "ing, too late, that the same exertions employed in

"some other line of advantage would have been more "productive. But suppose him to have been, through "life, as free from the effects of these sources of vexation "as the most favourable picture could represent him, "'he shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' He may "not have been a miser; but he was a lover of money. "He may not have been an extortioner; but he was a "lover of money. He may not have been fraudulent; "but he was a lover of money. 'He shall not inherit "the kingdom of God.' He has had his day and his "object. He has sought, and he may have accumu- "lated, earthly possessions. By their instrumentality he "may have gratified many other appetites and desires. "But he did not seek first the kingdom of God; there- "fore he shall not obtain it. He 'loved the world;' "therefore he 'shall perish with the world.' He has "wilfully bartered his soul for money. In vain is he "now aghast at his former madness. In vain does he "now detest the idol which he worshipped. The gate "of salvation is closed against him. He inherits the "bitterness of unavailing remorse, the horrors of eternal "death."—Pp. 145, 146.

If we were called to specify the discourse in the present volume that appeared to us the most ingenious and original, we should be inclined to point to the eighteenth, on Suspicion.

Having expressed our warm approbation of this performance, justice compels us to notice what appear to us its principal blemishes; which, however, are so overbalanced by the merit of the whole, that we should scarcely deem them worthy of remark, were it not requisite to vindicate our claim to impartiality. Against the sentiments or the arrangement of these discourses we have nothing to object: the former are almost invariably just and important, often striking and original; the latter is natural and easy, preserving the *spirit* of method even where it may seem to neglect the form; equally remote from the looseness of an harangue, and the ostentation of logical exactness. With the style of this work we cannot say that we are quite so much satisfied. Per-

spicuous, dignified, and correct, it yet wants something more of amenity, variety, and ease. Instead of that flexibility which bends to accommodate itself to the different conceptions which occur, it preserves a sort of uniform stateliness. The art of transposition, carried, in our opinion, to excess, together with the preference of learned to plain Saxon words, give it an air of Latinity, which must necessarily render it less intelligible and acceptable to unlettered minds. It is, indeed, but fair to remark, that the discourses appear to have been chiefly designed for the use of the higher classes. But while we allow this apology its just weight, we are still of opinion that the composition might have assumed a more easy and natural air, without losing any thing of its force or beauty. Addresses from the pulpit should, in our apprehension, always make some approach to the character of being plain and popular.

Another blemish which strikes us in this work, is the frequent use of interrogations, introduced, not only in the warm and impassioned parts, where they are graceful, but in the midst of argumentative discussion. We have been struck with the prevalence of this practice in the more recent works of clergymen, beyond those of any other order of men. With Demosthenes, we know interrogation was a very favourite figure; but we recollect, at the same time, it was chiefly confined to the more vehement parts of his speeches, in which, like the eruptions of a furnace, he broke out upon, and consumed his opponents. In him it was the natural expression of triumphant indignation: after he had subdued and laid them prostrate by the force of his arguments, by his abrupt and terrible interrogations he trampled them in the mire. In calm and dispassionate discussion, the frequent use of questions appears to us unnatural: it discomposes the attention by a sort of starting and irregular motion, and is a violation of dignity, by affecting to be lively where it is sufficient praise to be cogent and convincing. In a word, when, instead of being used to give additional vehemence to a discourse, they are interspersed in a series of arguments, as an expedient for enlivening the attention and

varying the style, they have an air of undignified flippancy. We should scarcely have noticed these little circumstances in an inferior work; but we could not satisfy ourselves to let them pass without observation in an author who, to merits of a more substantial nature, joins so many and such just pretensions to the character of a fine writer.

REVIEW

OF

GREGORY'S LETTERS.

Letters to a Friend on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties of the Christian Religion. By OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D. *of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.* 1812.

As this is a work of no ordinary merit, and written upon a subject which all must confess to be of the last importance, we shall endeavour, after being indulged with a few preliminary remarks, to give a pretty copious analysis of its contents; not doubting the greater part of our readers will be solicitous to avail themselves of the rich entertainment and instruction which its perusal will unquestionably afford. The first volume is employed in the discussion of a subject which has engaged the powers of the wisest of men through a series of ages; and minds of every size, and of every diversity of acquisition, having contributed their quota towards its elucidation, the accumulation of materials is such, that it has become more necessary, perhaps more difficult, to arrange than to invent. In the conduct of so extensive an argument, the talents of the writer will chiefly appear, in giving the due degree of relief and prominence to the different branches of the subject,—in determining what should be placed in a strong and brilliant light, and what should be more slightly sketched,—and disposing the whole in such a manner as shall give it the most impressive effect. If there is little room for the display of invention, other powers are requisite, not less rare or less useful; a nice and discriminating judgement, a true logical taste, and a

talent of extensive combination. An ordinary thinker feels himself lost in so wide a field; is incapable of classifying the objects it presents; and wastes his attention on such as are trite and common, instead of directing it to those which are great and interesting. If there are subjects which it is difficult to discuss for want of data to proceed upon—and, while they allure by their appearance of abstract grandeur, are soon found to lose themselves in fruitless logomachies and unmeaning subtleties, such as the greater part of the discussions on time, space, and necessary existence,—there are others whose difficulty springs from an opposite cause, from the immense variety of distinct topics and considerations involved in their discussion, of which the divine origination of christianity is a striking specimen; which it has become difficult to treat as it ought to be treated, merely in consequence of the variety and super-abundance of its proofs.

On this account, we suspect that this great cause has been not a little injured by the injudicious conduct of a certain class of preachers and writers, who, in just despair of being able to handle a single topic of religion to advantage, for want of having paid a devout attention to the Scriptures, fly like harpies to the evidences of christianity, on which they are certain of meeting with something prepared to their hands, which they can tear, and soil, and mangle at their pleasure.

Diripiuntque dapes, contactuque omnia fœdant.

The famine also, with which their prototypes in Virgil threatened the followers of Æneas, is not more dismal than that which prevails among their hearers and readers. The folly we are adverting to did not escape the observation nor the ridicule of Swift, who remarked in his days, that the practice of mooting, on every occasion, the question of the origin of christianity was much more likely to unsettle the faith of the simple, than to counteract the progress of infidelity. It is dangerous to familiarize every promiscuous audience to consider religion as a thing which yet remains to be proved,

to acquaint them with every sophism and cavil which a perverse and petulant ingenuity has found out, unaccompanied, as is too often the case, with a satisfactory answer; thus leaving the poison to operate, without the antidote, in minds which ought to be strongly imbued with the principles, and awed by the sanctions, of the gospel. It is degrading to the dignity of a revelation, established through a succession of ages by indubitable proofs, to be adverting every moment to the hypothesis of its being an imposture, and to be inviting every insolent sophist to wrangle with us about the title, when we should be cultivating the possession. The practice we are now censuring is productive of another inconvenience. The argument of the truth of christianity being an argument of accumulation, or, in other words, of that nature, that the force of it results less from any separate consideration than from an almost infinite variety of circumstances, conspiring toward one point, and terminating in one conclusion; this concentration of evidence is broken to pieces when an attempt is made to present it in superficial descants; than which nothing can be conceived better calculated to make what is great appear little, and what is ponderous, light. The trite observation, that a cause is injured by the adoption of feeble arguments, rests on a basis not often considered, perhaps, by those who most readily assent to its truth. We never think of estimating the powers of the imagination on a given subject, by the actual performance of the poet; but if he disappoint us, we immediately ascribe his failure to the poverty of his genius, without accusing his subject or his art. The regions of fiction we naturally conceive to be boundless; but, when an attempt is made to convince us of the truth of a proposition respecting a matter of fact or a branch of morals, we take it for granted, that he who proposes it has made himself perfectly master of his argument; and that, as no consideration has been neglected that would favour his opinion, we shall not err in taking our impression of the cause from the defence of its advocate. If that cause happen to be such as involves the dearest interests of mankind,

we need not remark how much injury it is capable of sustaining from this quarter.

Let us not be supposed, by these remarks, to comprehend within our censure the writer, who amidst the multifarious proofs of revelation, selects a single topic, with a view to its more elaborate discussion, provided it be of such a nature that it will support an independent train of thought; such, for example, as Paley has pursued in his Horæ Paulinæ, to which a peculiar value ought to be attached, as a clear addition to the body of christian evidences. All we mean to assert is, that it is incomparably better to be silent on the evidences of christianity, than to be perpetually adverting to them in a slight and superficial manner; and that a question so awful and momentous as that relating to the origin of the christian religion, ought not to be debased into a trivial commonplace. Let it be formally discussed, at proper intervals, by such men, and such only, as are capable of bringing to it the time, talents, and information, requisite to place it in a commanding attitude. That the author of the present performance is possessed of these qualifications to a very great degree, will sufficiently appear from the analysis we propose to give of the work, and the specimens we shall occasionally exhibit of its execution.

It is ushered in by a modest and dignified dedication to Colonel Mudge, lieutenant-governor of that royal military institution, of which the author is so distinguished an ornament. The whole is cast into the form of Letters to a Friend; and the first volume, we are given to understand, formed the subject of an actual correspondence. As much of the epistolary style is preserved as is consistent with the nature of a serious and protracted argument, without ill-judged attempts at refreshing the attention of the reader by strokes of gaiety and humour. The mind of the writer appears to have been too deeply impressed with his theme to admit of such excursions, the absence of which will not, we are persuaded, be felt or regretted.

Before he proceeds to state the direct proofs of the divinity of the christian religion, he shows, in a very

striking manner, the absurdities which must of necessity be embraced by those who deny all pretences to revelation; enumerating, in the form of a creed, the various strange and untenable positions which form the subject of sceptical belief. In this part of the work, that disease in the intellectual temperament of infidels is placed in a stronger and juster light than we remember to have seen it, which may not improperly be denominated the credulity of unbelievers. This representation forms the contents of the first letter.

The necessity of revelation is still more indisputably evinced by an appeal to facts, and a survey of the opinions which prevailed among the most enlightened heathens, respecting God, moral duty, and a future state. Under each of these heads, our author has selected, with great judgement, numerous instances of the flagrant and pernicious errors entertained by the most celebrated pagan legislators, poets, and philosophers; sufficient to demonstrate, beyond all contradiction, the inability of unassisted reason, in its most improved and perfect state, to conduct man to virtue and happiness, and the necessity, thence resulting, of superior aid. Much diligence of research, and much felicity of arrangement, are displayed in the management of this complicated topic, where the reader will find exhibited, in a condensed form, the most material facts adduced in Leland's voluminous work on this subject. All along, the author holds the balance with a firm and steady hand, without betraying a disposition either to depreciate the value of those discoveries and improvements to which reason really attained, or to charge the picture of its aberrations and defects with deeper shades than justly belong to it. The most eminent among the pagans themselves, it ought to be remembered, who, having no other resource, were best acquainted with its weakness and its power, never dreamed of denying the necessity of revelation: this they asserted in the most explicit terms; and on some occasions seem to have expected and anticipated the communication of such a benefit. We make no apology for citing, from the present work, the following remarkable passage out of Plato, tending both to confirm the fact of a revelation being anticipated, and to evince, supposing nothing supernatural in the case, the profound sagacity of that great author. He says, "This just person (the inspired teacher of whom he had been speaking) must be poor, and void of all qualifications but those of virtue alone; that a wicked world would not bear his instructions and reproofs; and therefore, that within three or four years after he began to preach he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and at last be put to death."* In whatever light we consider it, this must be allowed to be a most remarkable passage; whether we regard it as merely the conjecture of a highly enlightened mind, or as the fruit of prophetic suggestion: nor are we aware of any absurdity in supposing that the prolific Spirit scattered, on certain occasions, some seeds of truth amidst that mass of corruption and darkness which oppressed the pagan world. The opinion we have ventured to advance, is asserted in the most positive terms, in several parts of Justin Martyr's Second Apology. Without pursuing this inquiry farther, we shall content ourselves with remarking, that, as the sufficiency of mere reason, as the guide to truth, never entered into the conception of pagans, so it could never have been thus adduced at all, but in consequence of confounding its results with the dictates of revelation, which since its publication, has never ceased to modify the speculations, and aid the inquiries of those who are least disposed to bow to its authority. On all questions of morality and religion, the streams of thought have flowed through channels enriched with a celestial ore, whence they have derived the tincture to which they are indebted for their rarest and most salutary qualities.

Before we dismiss the subject, we would just observe, that the inefficacy of unassisted reason in religious concerns appears undeniably in two points: the doubtful manner in which the wisest pagans were accustomed to express themselves respecting a future state, the existence of which Warburton is confident none of the philo-

* De Republica, Lib. ii.

sophers believed; and their proud reliance on their own virtue, which was such as left no room for repentance. Of a future state, Socrates, in the near prospect of death, is represented by Plato as expressing a hope, accompanied with the greatest uncertainty; and, with respect to the second point, the lofty confidence in their own virtue, which we have imputed to them, the language of Cicero, in one of his familiar letters, is awfully decisive: "Nec enim dum ero, angor ulla re, cum *omni caream culpa;* et si non ero, sensu omni carebo." "While I exist, I shall be troubled at nothing, since I have no fault whatever; and if I shall not exist, I shall be devoid of all feeling."* So true is it that life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour; and that, until he appeared, the greatest of men were equally unacquainted with their present condition and their future prospects.

The next Letter, which is the fourth in the series, is on mysteries in religion. Aware that, while the prejudice against whatever is mysterious subsists, the saving truths of the gospel can find no entrance, the author has taken great, and, as far as the force of argument can operate, successful pains, to point out the weakness of the foundations on which that prejudice rests. He has shown, by a large induction of particulars, in natural religion, in natural philosophy, and in pure and mixed mathematics, that with respect to each of these sciences, we arrive, by infallible steps, at conclusions of which we can form no clear, determinate conceptions; and that the higher parts of mathematics especially, the science which glories in its superior light and demonstration, teem with mysteries as incomprehensible to the full as those which demand our assent in revelation. His skill as a mathematician, for which he has long been distinguished, serves him on this occasion to excellent purpose, by enabling him to illustrate his subject by well selected examples from his favourite science; and by that means to prove, in the most satisfactory manner, that the mysterious parts of christianity are exactly analogous to

* Vol. I. p. 51.

the difficulties inseparable from other branches of knowledge, not excepting those which make the justest pretensions to demonstration. We run no hazard in affirming, that rarely, if ever, have superior philosophical attainments been turned to a better account, or a richer offering brought from the fields of science into the temple of God. Some of his illustrations, being drawn from the sublimer speculations of mathematics, must necessarily be unintelligible to ordinary readers: but many of them are plain and popular; and he has succeeded in making the principle on which he reasons throughout perfectly plain and perspicuous, which is this—that we are able, in a multitude of instances, to ascertain the *relations* of things, while we know little or nothing of the *nature* of the things themselves. If the distinction itself is not entirely new, the force of argument with which it is supported, and the extent to which its illustration is carried, are such as evince much original thinking. We should seriously recommend this part of the work to the perusal of "the barrister,"* if he were capable of understanding it; and to all, without exception, who have been perverted by the shallow and ambiguous sophism, first broached, we believe, by Dr. Foster, that where mystery begins, religion ends; when the fact is, that religion and mystery both begin and end together, a portion of what is inscrutable to our faculties being intimately and inseparately blended with its most vital and operative truths. A religion without its mysteries, is a temple without its God.

Having thus marked out the ground, removed the rubbish, and made room for the foundation, our author proceeds with the skill of a master to erect a firm and noble structure, conducting the argument for the truth of christianity through all its stages, and commencing his labours in this part of his subject with establishing the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred volume. As he manifestly aims at utility, not at display, we are

* An anonymous opposer of evangelical principles, who had then attained some celebrity, but is now quite forgotten. Ed.

glad to find he has availed himself of the profound and original reasoning of Hartley, which he has fortified all along with ingenious reflections of his own, and crowned by an appeal to the principal testimonies of christian and pagan antiquity. The Letter devoted to this subject is long, but not more so than the occasion demanded, and is replete with varied and extensive information. To the whole he has annexed a very accurate and particular account of the researches and discoveries of Dr. Buchanan, made during his visit to the Syrian churches in India; nor are we aware that there is a single consideration of moment, tending to confirm the genuineness and integrity of the Scriptures in their present state, which, in the course of our author's extended investigation, has escaped his notice. By some he will be blamed for placing the proofs of the authenticity of the sacred records before the argument from prophecy and miracles: but we think he is right in adopting such an arrangement; since the reasoning on this part not only stands independent of the sequel, but greatly abridges his subsequent labour, by enabling him to appeal on every occasion to the testimony of scripture, not indeed as inspired, but as an authentic document, that point having been previously established; while it is in perfect unison with that solicitude he every where evinces to imbue the mind of his readers with a serious and devotional spirit. Here is a book of a singular character, and of high antiquity, from which christians profess to derive the whole of their information on religion; and it comes down to us under such circumstances, that every thing relating to it is capable of being investigated, apart from the consideration of prophecies and miracles, except its claim to inspiration. Why, then, should not the pretensions of this book be examined at the very outset, as far as they are susceptible of an independent examination; since the proof of its being genuine and authentic will extend its consequences so far into the subsequent matter of discussion, as well as exert a great and salutary influence on the mind of the inquirer?

The next Letter is devoted to the subject of prophecy;

in which, after noticing a few of the more remarkable predictions relating to the revolutions of power and empire, he descends to a more particular investigation of the prophecies relating to the Messiah, which he arranges under three heads: such as respect the time and place of his appearance; his character, doctrine, rejection, and final triumph; and the exact correspondence betwixt his contemptuous treatment and sufferings, and the representations of the ancient oracles. Under the last, he embraces the opportunity of rescuing the proof from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, from the cavils of the Jews, as well as from the insinuation of certain infidels, that the prophecy was written after the event; which he triumphantly refutes by an appeal to a remarkable passage in the books of Origen against Celsus. In confirming the inference from prophecy, we again meet with a judicious application of the author's mathematical skill, by which he demonstrates, from the doctrine of chances, the almost infinite improbability of the occurrence of even a small number of contingent events predicted of any one individual; and the absolute impossibility, consequently, of accounting for the accomplishment of such numerous predictions as were accomplished in the person of the Messiah, without ascribing it to the power and wisdom of the Deity.

From the consideration of prophecy, he proceeds to the evidence of miracles, and the credibility of human testimony. He begins with stating, in few and simple terms, but with much precision, the just idea of a miracle, which, he remarks, has oftener been obscured than elucidated by definition; while the sentiments entertained by good men upon the subject have been almost uniformly correct, when they have not been entangled or heated by controversy. This branch of the evidences of revelation is certainly very little indebted to the introduction of subtle refinements. In resting the evidence of the Jewish and christian revelations on the ground of miracles, the author restricts his proposition to *uncontrolled miracles;* on the propriety of which, different judgements will probably be formed

by his readers. We believe him to be right: since, admitting the limitation to be unnecessary, it is but an extreme of caution, a leaning to the safe side; for who will deny that it is much easier to prove it to be inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, to permit an *uncontrolled* miracle to be performed in support of error, than to demonstrate, from a metaphysical consideration of the powers and capacities of spiritual agents of a high order, their incapacity of accomplishing what, to our apprehensions, must appear supernatural? The writer of this, at least, must confess for himself, he could never find any satisfaction in such speculations, not even in those of Farmer, ingenious as they are; which always appeared to him to be like advancing to an object by a circuitous and intricate path, rather than taking the nearest road. But to return to the present performance. After exhibiting the most approved answers to the flimsy sophistry of Hume, intended to evince the incredibility of miracles,—and corroborating them by a copious illustration of the four criteria of miraculous facts, suggested by Leslie, in his admirable work, entitled, A Short Method with the Deists, he reduces the only suppositions which can be formed respecting the miracles recorded in the New Testament, to the four following heads, which we shall give in the words of the author:—

"Either, first, the recorded accounts of those miracles "were absolute fictions, wickedly invented by some who "had a wish to impose upon mankind.

"Or, secondly, Jesus did not work any true miracles; "but the senses of the people were, in some way or "other, deluded, so that they believed he really did per- "form miracles, when, in fact, he did not.

"Or, thirdly, that the spectators were not in any way "deluded, but knew very well he wrought no miracles; "yet were all (both enemies and friends, the Jews them- "selves not excepted, though they daily 'sought occa- "sion against him,') united in a close confederacy, to "persuade the world he wrought the most surprising "things. So that, while some actively circulated reports

"of those amazing occurrences, the rest kept their coun- "sel, never offering to unmask the fraud, but managing "the matter with so much dexterity and cunning, and "such an exact harmony and correspondence, that the "story of Jesus Christ's performing miracles should be- "come current, should obtain almost universal credit, "*and not a single person be able to disprove it.*

"Or, fourthly, that he did actually perform those as- "tonishing works; and that the accounts given of them "by the christian writers in the New Testament are "authentic and correct.

"He that does not adopt the last of these conclusions "will find it a matter of very small consequence which "of the other three he chooses; for that the stories can- "not be *fictions*, is evident from the reasonings of Les- "lie, already adduced; and it will be seen farther, from "a moment's consideration, that the denial of the mira- "cles of Jesus Christ, *in any way*, leads necessarily to "the admission of a series of real miracles of another "kind."

He closes this part of his disquisition with an elaborate confutation of the notion too generally admitted by the advocates of revelation, that the evidence of miraculous facts necessarily grows weaker in proportion to the distance of the time at which they were performed; and in no part does the vigour of his understanding appear to more advantage than in his reasonings on this point, where, among many excellent, we meet with the following profound remark:—

"It is only," he observes, "with regard to the facts "recorded in the Bible, that men ever talk of the daily "diminution of credibility. Who complains of a decay "of evidence in relation to the actions of Alexander, "Hannibal, Pompey, or Cæsar? How many fewer of "the events recorded by Plutarch, or Polybius, or Livy, "are believed now, (on account of a diminution of evi- "dence,) than were believed by Mr. Addison, or Lord "Clarendon, or Geoffrey Chaucer? We never hear per- "sons wishing they had lived ages earlier, that they "might have had better proofs that Cyrus was the con-

" queror of Babylon, that Darius was beaten in several " battles by Alexander, that Titus destroyed Jerusalem, " that Hannibal was entirely routed by Scipio, or Pom- " pey by Julius Cæsar; though we sometimes find men " of ardent and enterprising minds exclaiming, 'O that " I had lived and been present, when such splendid " events occurred, how lively an interest should I have " taken in such scenes, how much concern in their ter- " mination!' And, indeed, it is the frequent hearing of " such exclamations that causes men *to confound weight* " *of evidence with warmth or depth of feeling; and to* " *lose sight of the essential difference between real evidence,* " *or the true basis of belief in history, and the sensible im-* " *pression or influence which such history may make upon* " *the mind.*"

We have only to remark, before we dismiss this subject, that, whereas the evidence of facts which occurred at a distant period is usually placed under the head of *successive* evidence, this distinction, as applicable to the miracles of the gospel, must either be rejected altogether, or admitted with a caution against being misled by the ambiguous use of words. The evidence, in this case, is not to be confounded for a moment with that of a report transmitted through successive ages to the present time, since the record which contains the miraculous facts carries us back to the apostolic age; so that, admitting its antiquity to be what it pretends, of which there is the most satisfactory evidence, the only link in the succession is that which separates the performers or spectators of the miracles from their narrators, who in the case before us, however, are frequently the same persons.

In order to give that conspicuous place which is due to the greatest and most momentous of these miracles, as well as to do justice to the independent train of proofs by which it is supported, Dr. G. has assigned a separate Letter to the Resurrection of Christ, in which he has placed this great fact in the clearest light; and, to remove every shadow of hesitation arising from the minute variations in the account given of it by the evangelists, has

taken the pains to digest from their separate narratives a distinct statement of the whole transaction, which, as far as we have had time to examine it, appears very satisfactory.

To this succeeds an ample illustration of the argument for the truth of christianity, drawn from its early and extensive propagation; where the fact is placed beyond all contradiction, by numerous and decisive testimonies, adduced from the ancient apologists and pagan writers. The dates of the ten successive persecutions are accurately assigned; and the most striking circumstances attending the last, in particular, are distinctly and forcibly exhibited. This forms the subject of the Ninth Letter, which closes with some admirable observations on the intrinsic excellence of the religion of Jesus, tending to show that it corresponds to all the characters, and fulfils all the indications, which a revelation from heaven might be expected to possess.

The remaining Letters which compose this volume are employed in proving the inspiration of the Scriptures, and answering various miscellaneous objections and cavils advanced against the Bible. Although we have already adduced some specimens of the author's style and composition, and shall have occasion to produce more in the course of our strictures on the second volume, yet we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of laying before our readers the following highly beautiful and eloquent passage. Speaking of the analogy betwixt the difficulties offered in the sciences and the mysteries of religion, he observes—

" Philosophers, notwithstanding all these difficulties, " recommend the cultivation and diffusion of the sciences, " because of their tendency to sharpen the intellectual " faculties of man, and meliorate his condition in society. " With how much greater reason and earnestness, then, " should christians recommend the dissemination and " adoption of 'pure and undefiled religion,' considering " its direct tendency to enlarge the understanding, and " yet fill it with the contemplation of Deity; to purify " and harmonize the passions, to refine the moral sense,

"to qualify and strengthen for every function in life; to "sustain under the pressure of affliction, to afford con- "solation in sickness, and enable us to triumph in death!

"What other science can even make a pretension to "dethrone oppression, to abolish slavery, to exclude war, "to extirpate fraud, to banish violence, to revive the "withered blossoms of paradise? Such are the preten- "sions and blessings of genuine christianity; and wher- "ever genuine christianity prevails, they are experienced. "Thus it accomplishes its promises on earth, where it "alone has enemies; it will, therefore, accomplish them "in heaven, where its friends reign. Here, indeed, its "advocate must be reduced to silence; for how shall he "display the meaning of its *celestial* promises! How "describe dignity so vast, or picture glory so brilliant! "How shall language delineate what mind cannot "imagine! And where is that mind, among puny and "ephemeral creatures, that can penetrate the thick "obscure; that can describe the light of perfect know- "ledge, that can feel the glow of perfect love, that can "breathe the air of perfect happiness?"—Vol. I. pp. 75, 76.

We proceed to notice the most important positions and reasonings contained in the second volume, which the author has devoted to a display of the doctrines and duties of christianity. We are aware that many will suspect him of a partial and bigoted attachment to his own opinions, in consequence of the anxiety he manifests to communicate and support those views of christianity, which, in his estimation, form its most striking peculiarity. It is plain our author considers the evidences of christianity as entirely subservient to its doctrines; and that he is consequently far from supposing, with some modern divines, that he has accomplished his work by proving that christianity is a true and a genuine revelation from God. He judges it necessary to spend some time and some labour in considering *what it is* that is true, *what it is* that is revealed. Were we not familiar with the fact, we should be not a little surprised at the prevalence of a contrary persuasion; we should probably

think it strange that such an anxiety should be evinced to rest the truth of christianity on the firmest possible basis, along with such a profound indifference to every attempt to investigate its import. Some wonderful charm, it seems, is contained in a bare avowal that christianity is a revelation from God, apart from any distinct perceptions of its truths, or any solemn advertence to its genuine scope and tendency. Embalmed and preserved, like some Egyptian monarch, in the form of a venerable and antiquated document, it is to be carefully kept, and always approached with respect, but never allowed to take its place among the living, nor supposed to be useful to mankind according to any known law of operation. The most magnificent appellations are applied to it: it is the light of the world, the true riches, the treasure hid in the field, and the pearl of great price. All these, and a thousand other encomiums, are lavished on the Scriptures, by men, who at the same time feel no scruple in insinuating that this boasted communication from heaven contains no truths beyond the limits of reason, and that what the bulk of christians in our age have deemed such, are the distempered visions of enthusiasm, if they are not, in some instances, to be ascribed to the erroneous conceptions, entertained by the apostles, of the religion they were appointed to propagate. It is the *possession* of a revelation, not the *use*, which these men are accustomed to contemplate and to value. As the miser conceives himself rich by the treasure which he never employs, so the persons to whom we allude suppose themselves enlightened by a book from which they profess to derive no information, and saved by a religion which is allowed to engage little or none of their attention. This is one of the most distinguished features in the character of those, who with exemplary modesty style themselves *rational* christians. In this spirit a distinguished prelate of the present age * has published a collection of tracts for the benefit of the junior clergy, in which not a single treatise is admitted, which professes to exhibit a view of christian doctrine; and has introduced it with a preface,

* Bishop Watson.

ingeniously calculated, under pretence of decrying dogmas, to bring all such inquiries into contempt. It certainly is not difficult to perceive whence this manner of thinking proceeds, nor whither it tends. It proceeds from a rooted aversion to the genuine truths of revelation; and had it not received a timely check, would have terminated in the general prevalence of scepticism. It presents a neutral ground, on which professed christians and infidels may meet, and proceed to assail with their joint force the substantial truth of our religion. There is nothing in such views of christianity to appal the infidel; nothing to mortify the pride, nothing to check or control the exorbitancies, of that "carnal mind" which is "enmity against God." In stripping the religion of Christ of all that is spiritual, they render it weak and inefficacious as an instrument of renovating the mind; and, by fostering its pride and sparing its corruption, prepare it for shaking off the restraints of religion altogether. It gives us, however, unfeigned satisfaction to perceive, that the evil we so much deprecate appears to have met with a fatal check; and that the present times are distinguished by two things, which we cannot but consider as most favourable prognostics,—an increased attention to the peculiar doctrines of christianity, and a growing unanimity with respect to the modes in which those doctrines are entertained. There is less disposition on the one hand, to receive for christianity a system of pagan ethics, and on the other to confound points of doubtful speculation with its fundamental doctrines. The religious zeal of the present day is more open and catholic than in former times, partaking less of the acrimony of party, and more of the inspiration of truth and charity. The line of demarcation betwixt sound doctrines and heresy is better ascertained than it has ever been before; and the christian world are equally averse from whatever approaches to socinian impiety, and from the mooting of interminable questions.

In the statements of the peculiar doctrines of christianity, there are two extremes to be avoided. The one is, that of pusillanimously shrinking from their bold

originality, and attempting to recommend them to the acceptance of proud and worldly-minded men by the artifices of palliation and disguise; of which, in our opinion, the Bishop of Lincoln has given an egregious specimen in his late work.* The other extreme is that of stating them in a metaphysical form, mixing doubtful deductions with plain assertions, and thereby incumbering them with needless subtleties and refinements. We should neither be ashamed of the dictates of the Spirit, nor "add to his words, lest we be reproved." They will always appear with the most advantage, and carry the most conviction, when they are exhibited in their native simplicity, without being mixed with heterogeneous matter, or with positions of doubtful authority. In our apprehension, the true way of contemplating the peculiar doctrines of christianity, is to consider them as *facts* believed on the authority of the Supreme Being; not to be proved by reason, since their truth does not result from any perceptible relations in our ideas, but they owe their existence entirely to the will and counsel of the Almighty Potentate. On this account, we never consider it safe to rest their truth on a philosophical basis, nor imagine it is possible to add to their evidence by an elaborate train of reasoning. Let the fair grammatical import of scripture language be investigated; and whatever propositions are, by an easy and natural interpretation, deducible from thence, let them be received as the dictates of infinite wisdom, whatever aspect they bear, or whatever difficulties they present. Repugnant to reason they never can be, because they spring from the Author of it; but superior to reason, whose limits they will infinitely surpass, we must expect to find them, since they are a communication of such matters of fact, respecting the spiritual and eternal world, as need not have been communicated, if the knowledge of them could have been acquired from any other quarter. The facts with which we have become acquainted in the natural world would appear stupendous, were they communicated merely on the evidence of testimony: they

* Entitled, "A Refutation of Calvinism."

fail to astonish us, chiefly because they have been arrived at step by step, by means of their analogy to some preceding one. We have climbed the eminence by a slow progression, and our prospect has insensibly widened as we advanced, instead of being transported thither instantaneously by a superior power. Revelation conducts us to the truth at once, without previous training, without any intellectual process preceding, without condescending to afford other proof than what results from the veracity and wisdom of the Creator: and when we consider that this truth respects much sublimer relations and concerns than those which subsist in the material world, —that it regards the ways and counsels of God respecting man's eternal destiny,—is it surprising it should embrace what greatly surpasses our previous conjectures, and even transcends our perfect comprehension? To a serious and upright mind, however, its discoveries are no sooner made, than they become supremely acceptable: the interposition of the Deity in the great moral drama is seen to be absolutely necessary; since none but infinite wisdom could clear up the intricacies, nor any power short of omnipotence relieve the distress produced. These very truths, which some ridicule as mysteries, and others despise as dogmas, are, to the enlightened, "sweeter than honey or the honeycomb;" apart from which, whatever else is contained in the Bible would be perfectly tasteless and insipid. Though he receives every communication from God with devout and grateful emotions, he feels no hesitation in confessing, that it is in these parts of revelation he especially exults and triumphs; it is these, which, in his estimation, entitle it to the appellation of "*marvellous light.*"

If it is no small gratification to find so perfect a concurrence in these sentiments, on the part of our author: to find them stated and illustrated in so able a manner as they are throughout this work, is a still greater. The first Letter in this volume is devoted to a general view of the christian doctrines, designed to obviate certain prejudices, and to prepare the mind for that serious inquiry into their nature and import, which cannot fail, under the

blessing of God, of conducting it to the most satisfactory conclusions.

Our author never loses sight of the gospel as a *restorative dispensation;* this is its primary and most essential feature; and the most dangerous and numerous aberrations from it, may be traced to the neglect of considering it in this light. It is not a prescription of a rule of life to the innocent, but the annunciation of a stupendous method of relief for the sinner. Overlooking all petty varieties, and subordinate distinctions, it places the whole human race on one level; abases them all in the dust before the Infinite Majesty; and offers, indiscriminately, a provision of sanctification to the polluted, and of pardon to the guilty. These are the glad tidings; this is the jubilee of the whole earth, proclaimed in the songs of angels, celebrated in the praises of the church, alike in her militant and her triumphant state—whether toiling in the vale of mortality, or rejoicing before the throne.

The second Letter in the series which composes this volume, is on the Depravity of Human Nature, where the reader will find the evidence of that melancholy but fundamental truth, exhibited with much conciseness, perspicuity, and force. The third is employed in stating the arguments for the atonement of Christ, under the four divisions of typical, prophetical, historical, and declaratory proofs; and the whole is closed by a very luminous and satisfactory answer to the most specious objections against that momentous truth. In adverting to the objection to a vicarious sacrifice, founded on the notion of its being unjust that the innocent should be appointed to suffer in the room of the guilty, we meet with the following admirable passage of Archbishop Tillotson, remarkable for that perfect good sense, simplicity, and perspicuity, which distinguish the writings of that excellent prelate.

"'If the matter,' says he, 'were searched to the bot-
"tom, all this perverse contention about our Saviour
"suffering for our benefit, but not in our stead, will sig-
"nify just nothing. For if Christ died for our benefit,

"so as, some way or other, *by virtue of his death and suf-*
"*ferings*, to save us from the wrath of God, and to pro-
"cure our escape from eternal death; this, for aught I
"know, is all that any body means by his dying in our
"stead. For he that dies with an intention to do that
"benefit for another, or to *save him from death*, doth cer-
"tainly, to all intents and purposes, die in his place and
"stead. And if they will grant this to be their mean-
"ing, the controversy is at an end, and both sides are
"agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phrase
"and manner of expression; which is to seek a quarrel,
"and an occasion of difference, when there is no real
"ground for it—a thing which ought to be very far from
"reasonable and peaceable minds. For many of the
"socinians say, that our Saviour's voluntary death and
"sufferings procured his exaltation at the right hand of
"God, and power and authority to forgive sins, and to
"give eternal life to as many as he pleased: so that they
"grant that his obedience and sufferings in the merito-
"rious consequence of them, redound to our benefit and
"advantage, as much as we pretend to say they do; only
"they are loth, in express terms, to acknowledge that
"Christ died in our stead; and this for no other reason,
"that I can imagine, *but because they have denied it so*
"*often and so long.*'"—Vol. II. p. 64.

We have only to say, on this part of the subject, that we heartily commiserate the state of that man's mind, who, whatever socinian prejudices he may have felt against the most glorious of all doctrines, that of the atonement, does not feel them shaken at least, if not removed, by the arguments adduced in this letter.

The next is devoted to the defence of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, which our author evinces in a masterly manner, from the predictions of the ancient prophets, compared with their application in the New Testament; from the conduct, the miracles, and the discourses of our Lord; from the declarations of his apostles; and from the concurrent testimony of the early christian writers and martyrs, before the council of Nice. Under the last head, the reader will meet with a copious induction of

passages, attesting this grand doctrine, selected with much judgement, and applied with great force. The author all along contends for the divinity of Christ as a *fundamental* tenet; and, of course, will forfeit all pretensions to candour with *rational* christians, on whose approbation, indeed, he appears to set very little value.

In the next Letter, which is on Conversion, he has treated of the nature and necessity of that new birth, on which our Lord insisted so strenuously in his discourse with Nicodemus, in a manner which will be as offensive to mere nominal christians as it will be instructive and satisfactory to serious and humble inquirers after truth. He shows, from well known and indubitable facts, the reality of such a change; and evinces its indispensable necessity, from the express declarations of scripture, the corruption of human nature, the exalted character of the Deity, and the nature of that pure and perfect felicity to which good men aspire after death. In illustrating this subject, he has made a happy use of Bishop Burnet's Narrative of the Conversion of the Earl of Rochester,—has carefully guarded his readers against the pernicious error of confounding regeneration with baptism,—and has closed the discussion with solving certain difficulties arising out of the subject, which have often perplexed serious minds.

As every effect naturally invites us to contemplate the cause, he passes from conversion to the consideration of Divine Influence, which is the subject of the succeeding Letter: and were we to give our opinion of the comparative merit of the different parts of this volume, we should be inclined to assign the palm to the disquisition on this confessedly mysterious subject. In no part, certainly, is the vigour of the author's very powerful understanding more eminently exerted; in none are the prejudices founded on a pretended philosophy more triumphantly dispelled. He has shown, in the most satisfactory manner, that the belief of an immediate divine influence on the mind, not only accords with the sentiments of the wisest men in pagan times, but that it is rendered highly reasonable by the close analogy it bears to the best-esta-

blished laws of the material world. Though there are many admirable passages in this portion of the work, which it would gratify us to lay before our readers, we must content ourselves with the following.

" No person can look into the world with the eye of a " philosopher, and not soon ascertain, that the grand " theatre of phenomena which lies before him, is naturally " subdivided into two great classes of scenery: the one " exhibiting constrained, the other voluntary motion; " the former characteristic of matter, the latter as clearly " indicating something perfectly distinct from matter, " and possessing totally opposite qualities. ' Pulverise " matter,' says Saurin, ' give it all the different forms of " which it is susceptible, elevate it to its highest degree " of attainment, make it vast and immense, moderate or " small, luminous or obscure, opaque or transparent, " there will never result any thing but *figures;* and " never will you be able, by all these combinations or " divisions, to produce one single sentiment, one single " thought.' The reason is obvious; a substance com- " pounded of innumerable parts, which every one ac- " knowledges matter to be, cannot be the subject of an " individual consciousness; the seat of which *must* be a " simple and undivided substance; as the great Dr. " Clarke has long ago irrefragably shown. Intellect and " volition are quite of a different nature from corporeal " figure or motion, and must reside in, or emanate from, " a different kind of being, a kind which, to distinguish " it from matter, is called spirit, or mind. Of these, the " one is necessarily inert, the other essentially active. " The one is characterised by want of animation, life, " and even motion, except as it is urged by something " *ab extra:* the other is living, energetic, self-moving, " and possessed of power to move other things. We " often fancy, it is true, that matter moves matter; but " this strictly speaking, is not correct. When one wheel, " or lever, in a system of machinery, communicates mo- " tion to matter, it can, at most, only communicate what " it has received; and if you trace the connexion of the " mechanism, you will at length arrive at a first mover,

' which first mover is, in fact, *spiritual.* If, for example, " it be an animal, it is evidently the spiritual part of that " animal from whence the motion originally springs. If, " otherwise, it be the descent of a weight, or the fall of " water, or the force of a current of air, or the expansive " power of steam, the action must be ultimately referred to " what are styled powers of nature, that is, to gravitation " or elasticity; and these, it is now well known, cannot " be explained by any allusion to material principles, but " to the indesinent operation of the Great Spirit, in whom " we live, and move, and have our being—the finger of " God touching and urging the various subordinate " springs, which, in their turn, move the several parts of " the universe. Thus God acts in all places, in all times, " and upon all persons. The whole material world, were " it not for his Spirit, would be inanimate and inactive: " all motion is derived either from his energy, or from a " spirit which he animates; and it is next to *certain,* " that the only primary action is that of spirit, and the " most direct and immediate that of spirit upon spirit."— P. 154.

We doubt not the intelligent reader will be of opinion, that the author has gone to the very bottom of this subject, and will feel highly gratified in seeing it placed in so clear and convincing a light; the more so, as he has taken care to guard against its most obvious abuse, by showing that the influence for which he contends is not be expected independent of means,—among which he considers prayer, and a conscientious regard to known duty, as the principal. We earnestly recommend this part of the performance to such of our readers as have, upon too light grounds, imbibed philosophical prejudices against the doctrine contended for; a doctrine which lies at the foundation of all spiritual religion, though treated by many with an excess of insolence and scorn, which can hardly be accounted for without adverting to the injudicious conduct of its advocates.

The important doctrine of Justification by Faith, forms the subject of the next Letter in the series. Here, after confirming the position he means to defend, by the

authority of the Homilies, he proceeds to a more particular discussion of the subject, under three heads of inquiry: What is meant by justification?—what by faith?—and what is the genuine import of "justification by faith?" Under each of these the reader will meet with much instruction, arising from a very luminous statement of truth, accompanied with happy illustrations. The charge against the doctrine pleaded for, of its tending to licentiousness, is very successfully combated and refuted.

The exhibition of the leading *doctrines* of christianity is completed in the three following Letters,—on Providence, the Resurrection, and the Eternal Existence of Man after Death. We perused, with much satisfaction, the author's masterly defence of a particular providence, the denial of which is, to all practical purposes, equivalent to the denial of a providence altogether. Trust in God is the act of an individual, as all the exercises of piety must necessarily be; so that if the providence of God embraces not the concerns of individuals, no rational foundation can be conceived for expecting protection from danger, or relief under distress, in answer to prayer. The denial of a particular providence is, it must be confessed, the best possible expedient for keeping God at a distance—and on that account so vehemently insisted on by certain periodical writers, the poison of whose impiety, prepared, it is generally understood, by *hallowed* hands, and distributed through the nation in a popular and seducing vehicle, has met with a powerful antidote and rebuke from Dr. Gregory, who, himself a layman, will be honoured as the champion of that religion which a clergyman has insulted and betrayed.* How is it that the conductors of the publication alluded to, allot to this clerical associate the province of libelling religion? Is it that its alliance with nominal sanctity gives rank impiety a new zest, at the same time that its total dereliction of principle more perfectly incorporates the specific design of the article with the general character of the work?

* See the Article on Methodism, in the Edinburgh Review.

In treating of the Resurrection of the Dead, the author has happily availed himself of the striking analogies which the system of nature presents, as if designed on purpose, as Tertullian more than insinuates, to excite the expectation of such an event. Among others highly deserving attention, we shall present our readers with the following, in the words of Dr. Gregory:—

"Nearly allied to these are the examples of peculiar "transformations undergone by various insects, and the "state of rest and insensibility which precede those "transformations: such as the chrysalis or aurelia state of "butterflies, moths, and silk-worms. The myrmeleon "formicaleo, of whose larva, and its extraordinary his-"tory, Reaumur and Roesel have given accurate descrip-"tions, continues in its insensible or chrysalis state about "four weeks. The libellula, or dragon-fly, continues "still longer in its state of inaction. Naturalists tell us, "that the worm repairs to the margin of its pond, in "quest of a convenient place of abode during its insen-"sible state. It attaches itself to a plant, or piece of dry "wood, and the skin, which gradually becomes parched "and brittle, at last splits opposite to the upper part of "the thorax: through this aperture the insect, now be-"come winged, quickly pushes its way; and, being thus "extricated from confinement, begins to expand its "wings, to flutter, and, finally, to launch into the air "with that gracefulness and ease which are peculiar to "this majestic tribe. Now, who that saw, for the first "time, the little pendant coffin in which the insect lay "entombed, and was ignorant of the transformation of "which we are now speaking, would ever predict that, "in a few weeks, perhaps in a few days or hours, it "would become one of the most elegant and active of "*winged* insects? And who that contemplates, with the "mind of a philosopher, this curious transformation, and "knows that two years before the insect mounts into air, "even while it is living in water, it has the rudiments of "wings, can deny that the body of a dead man may, at "some future period, be again invested with vigour and

" activity, and soar to regions for which some latent or-
" ganization may have peculiarly fitted it?"—P. 225.

In descanting on the change that will be effected by the resurrection, when we shall be invested with a glorified body, the language of the author rises to a high pitch of elevation, and exhibits a scene which surpasses the brightest visions of poetry; while the exactness of the delineation, in its most essential lineaments, is attested by the " true sayings of God." The science with which the mind of the author is so richly imbued, enables him to mingle a refined spirit of philosophy with the colours of imagination, which, without diminishing their brightness, compels the assent of the understanding, while it captivates the heart.

In the Letter on the Eternal Existence after Death, the author strenuously opposes the sleep of the soul, and urges formidable, and, we apprehend, irrefragable arguments, for interpreting the passages of scripture which speak of the everlasting misery of the impenitent, in their obvious and literal sense: nor have we met with a discussion of this awful subject so calculated to carry conviction to a philosophical mind, provided it be disposed to bow to the authority of revelation. His confutation of the reasoning of his opponents, founded on the supposed ambiguity of the terms employed to denote an eternal duration, is particularly masterly.

On the third branch of his subject, which relates to the Duties of Christianity, he is comparatively brief,—not, it is evident, from his undervaluing their importance, but partly, we conceive, on account of the length of his former discussions, and partly because in this part there is little room for controversy. He has contented himself with arranging the duties of christianity under three heads—those which relate to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves; and with illustrating and enforcing them by a direct appeal to the language of scripture.

Having endeavoured to put our readers in possession of the general plan and design of this work, we shall close this article with a few general observations on it.

Dr. Gregory, throughout, denominates the abettors of

the simple humanity of Christ, socinians, instead of employing their favourite appellation of unitarians. We rejoice that he has done so, and hope his example will be generally followed. To accede to the appellation of unitarians, is to yield up the very point in debate; for, ask them what they mean by unitarian, and they will feel no scruple in replying, that it denotes a believer in one God, in opposition to a tritheist. That this is not asserted at random, is evident, as well from many other facts, as from the following very remarkable one,—that when a noted academic was, some years since, expelled from the university of Cambridge, amidst various points which he insisted on in his defence, one was this, that it was quite absurd to censure him for avowing unitarian principles, since he never heard but of one person who publicly declared himself *not an unitarian*. Now, what did he mean by this singular assertion? Did he mean to say that he never heard of more than one person who publicly affirmed his belief in a *plurality of persons* in the Godhead? This is impossible. What could he mean, then, but that he never knew but of one person who affirmed himself *not to be a believer in one God?*—which is neither more nor less than to identify the term unitarian with a believer in one God, and the term trinitarian with a believer in three. Let the intelligent public judge whether it is not high time to withhold from these men an appellation which assumes the question at issue, and which cannot be bestowed without being converted into an occasion of insult and triumph over their opponents. There was a time when the learning and moderation of Lardner, and the fame and science of Priestley, combined to throw a transitory splendour over their system, and to procure from the christian world a forbearance and complaisance to which they were ill entitled. That time is past. Such *rational* christians as they are, should have discernment to perceive that it is not with them as in months past, when the candle of their leader shone around them: it becomes them to bow their spirit to the humbled state of their fortunes. They should learn at last to know themselves. The world is perfectly aware, whether they

perceive it or not, that socinianism is now a headless trunk, bleeding at every vein, and exhibiting no other symptoms of life but its frightful convulsions.

But why should they be offended at being styled socinians, when it is undeniable that they agree with Socinus in his fundamental position, (the simple humanity of Christ,) which is all the agreement that subsists between the followers of Calvin or Arminius, and those eminent persons? The calvinists are far from concurring in every particular with Calvin,—the arminians, with Arminius; yet neither of them have violently disclaimed these appellations, or considered them as terms of reproach. Why are the socinians only offended at being denominated after Socinus? Is it because they differ in the nature of Christ's person from that celebrated heresiarch? This they will not pretend. But they differ from him in many respects! In what respects? Is it in those respects in which his sentiments gave most offence to the christian world? Is it that they have receded from him in that direction which brings them nearer to the generally received doctrine of the church? Just the reverse. In the esteem of all but themselves they have descended many degrees lower in the scale of error, have plunged many fathoms deeper in the gulf of impiety; yet, with an assurance of which they have furnished the only example, they affect to consider themselves injured by being styled socinians, when they know, in their own consciences, that they differ from Socinus only in pushing the degradation of the Saviour to a much greater length —and that, in the view of the christian world, their religious delinquencies differ from his, only as treason differs from sedition, or sacrilege from theft. The appellation of socinian, as applied to them, is a term of forbearance, calculated, if they would suffer it, not to expose, but to hide, a part of their shame. Let them assume any denomination they please, provided it be such as will fairly represent their sentiments. Let them be styled antiscripturalists, humanitarians, semideists, priestleians, or socinians. But let them not be designated by a term which is merely coveted by them for the purpose of chicane and imposture.

Our readers will perceive that the system which Dr. Gregory strenuously abets is orthodoxy; but it is moderate and catholic; it is the orthodoxy of the three first centuries; it is that system which, communicated by Christ and his apostles, pervaded the church long before the confusion of modern sects arose, or even the distinction between protestants and catholics was heard of: it is the orthodoxy which has nourished the root of piety in every age, warmed the breasts of saints and martyrs, and will continue to subsist in the church till the heavens and the earth are no more.

We congratulate the public on the accession of Dr. Gregory to such a cause; and sincerely rejoice that, amidst his multifarious scientific pursuits, he has found time and inclination to meditate so deeply, and to exhibit so successfully, "the truth as it is in Jesus." We hope his example will stimulate other men of science and genius to pursue so noble a career. We will venture to assure them, that, upon a dying bed, it will occasion no regret to reflect upon their having enrolled their names with such illustrious laymen as Boyle, Newton, and Locke, in the defence of christianity.

In a beautiful passage of Euripides, Medea is introduced, expressing her surprise, that, amidst such a multitude of inventions and inquiries, the art of persuasion, the mistress of human volition, should alone have been neglected. This neglect cannot be imputed to Dr. Gregory. He has united, with extraordinary attainments in the severer sciences, the art of recommending his sentiments with the most impressive effect; and though he is above a solicitude respecting the minuter graces of finished composition, he exhibits, in an eminent degree, the most important ingredients of good writing. He is correct and luminous, and often rises to the tone of the most impassioned feeling. His language is eminently easy, flowing, and idiomatic. The abstractions of science have not in him exerted the influence often imputed to them, of chilling the heart, and impairing the vigour of the imagination. While he reasons with the comprehension and depth which distinguish the philosopher, he

feels with ardour, and paints with force. He is often inspired and transported with his theme. In the midst of pursuits which are not always found to have a propitious effect on the religious character of their votaries, he has found the means of preserving his devotion in its warmth, his faith in its purity, and his sensibility in its infantine freshness and vigour.

We must conclude with earnestly recommending this work to the attentive perusal of young persons whose minds have been cultivated by science and letters; and must be permitted to add, that we are acquainted with no book, in the circle of English literature, which is equally calculated to give persons of that description just views of the evidence, the nature, and the importance of revealed religion.

REVIEW

OF

BELSHAM'S MEMOIRS OF LINDSEY.

Memoirs of the late Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, A.M., including a brief Analysis of his Works; together with Anecdotes and Letters of eminent Persons, his Friends and Correspondents: also a general View of the Progress of the Unitarian Doctrine in England and America. By THOMAS BELSHAM, *Minister of the Chapel in Essex-street.* 8vo. Pp. xxiv. 544. 1812.

As the life of Mr. Lindsey is evidently adopted as a vehicle for the propagation of socinian sentiments, we shall be excused for being more copious in our remarks upon it, than the biography of a man of such extreme mediocrity of talents could otherwise possibly justify. If a zealous attachment to any system of opinions, can be supposed to be aided by its association with personal reputation, we cannot wonder at finding Mr. Lindsey's fondness for socinianism so ardent and so persevering, inasmuch as the annals of religion scarcely furnish an instance of a celebrity acquired so entirely by the adoption of a particular creed. Luther and Calvin would have risen to distinction, in all probability, if the Reformation had never been heard of; while the existence of such a man as Mr. Lindsey would not have been known beyond the precincts of his parish, had he not, under a peculiar combination of circumstances, embraced the tenets of Socinus.

His reputation is altogether accidental and factitious. Though the leading events of his life, with one exception, are marked by no striking peculiarities, yet, by the help of a great deal of adventitious matter, Mr. B. has

contrived to make it the groundwork of a bulky, and not unentertaining volume; disfigured, however, throughout, by that languid and inelegant verbosity which characterizes all his compositions. It must be confessed, Mr. Belsham has taken care in this work to exhibit himself as no ascetic, no religious enthusiast, but quite a man of the world; not by a lively delineation of its manners and foibles, still less by a developement of the principles by which mankind are actuated, but by such a profusion of compliments bestowed on men of rank and title, and so perfect a prostration before secular grandeur, as has never been paralleled, we suspect, in a christian divine. At the "pomp and circumstance" of human life, this philosopher appears awed and planet-struck, and utterly incapable of exercising that small portion of discrimination with which nature has endowed him. Every nobleman or statesman he has occasion to introduce, is uniformly ushered in with a splendid retinue of gorgeous epithets, in which there are as little taste and variety as if they had been copied verbatim from the rolls at the herald's office. Orators of pre-eminent powers, together with virtuous and enlightened noblemen, meet us at every turn; and we are not a little surprised at finding so much of the decoration and splendour of this mortal scene, in so close contact with the historical details of unitarianism. We have long remarked the eagerness of socinians to emblazon their system by associations with learning, rank, and fashion; but on no other occasion have we seen this humour carried so far as in these Memoirs.

The leading events of Mr. Lindsey's life are the following. He was born, June 20, 1723, at Middlewich in Cheshire, where his father was a mercer in respectable circumstances, but was afterwards reduced by misfortunes. His mother, whose maiden name was Spencer, was distantly related to the Marlborough family; and previously to her marriage, lived twenty years in the family of Frances, Countess of Huntingdon; a circumstance which led to considerable intimacy, that continued for some years, with the celebrated Selina, Countess

of Huntingdon, who married the son of that lady. Under the patronage of Lady Betty and Lady Ann Hastings, Mr. Lindsey was educated first at a school in the neighbourhood of Middlewich, whence he was removed, and placed under the care of the Rev. Mr. Barnard, master of the free grammar-school in that town, who is represented as a gentleman of distinguished learning and piety. His vacations were usually spent at the mansion of his noble patroness, in the vicinity of Leeds, during the life of Lady Betty Hastings; and, after her decease, at Ashby Place, near Ashby de la Zouch, in Leicestershire, where Lady Ann then fixed her residence. In the eighteenth year of his age, May 21, 1741, he was admitted a student at St. John's, Cambridge, where he acquitted himself with credit in his academical exercises, and behaved with such exemplary propriety as to attract the attention of Dr. Reynolds, Bishop of Lincoln, who thought fit to intrust him with the care of his grandson, a youth of fifteen. He was elected fellow of St. John's College in April, 1747. Having been ordained by Bishop Gibson, he was, at the recommendation of Lady Ann Hastings, presented to a chapel in Spital Square, by Sir George Wheler. In a short time after his settlement in London, the Duke of Somerset received him into his house in the capacity of domestic chaplain. He continued, after the decease of that nobleman, to reside some time with the duchess dowager, better known by the title of Countess of Hertford; and, at her request, he accompanied her grandson, the present Duke of Northumberland, then about nine years of age, and in a delicate state of health, to the Continent, where he continued two years; at the expiration of which time he brought back his noble pupil, improved both in his health and learning. From this distinguished personage he continued to receive attentions and favours as long as he lived. Immediately after his return from the Continent, he was presented by the Earl of Northumberland to the valuable rectory of Kirkby Whiske, in the north riding of Yorkshire; at first, under condition to resign it when the

person for whom it was intended should come of age; but this young man dying a short time afterwards, it was given to Mr. Lindsey unconditionally, in the usual form. In this very retired situation Mr. Lindsey continued about three years; and, during his residence in Yorkshire, he became acquainted with the celebrated Archdeacon Blackburne, at Richmond; a circumstance which led to important consequences, and to which he was indebted, under Providence, for the most important blessing of his life.

In the year 1756, at the request of the Huntingdon family, he resigned the living of Kirkby Whiske for the living of Piddletown, in Dorsetshire, which was in the gift of the Earl of Huntingdon. In this place he lived seven years; and, in 1760, married Miss Elsworth, the stepdaughter of Archdeacon Blackburne,—a lady whose principles were congenial with his own, and who is represented as possessed of a superior understanding and of exalted virtue. It was during his residence in that situation, that he first began to entertain scruples concerning the lawfulness of trinitarian worship, and of his continuing to officiate in the established church. It appears he had, from his early youth, disapproved of some things in the thirty-nine articles. Some years afterwards these doubts were matured into a full conviction that the divinity of Christ was an erroneous tenet, and that the Father was the sole object of worship; in consequence of which, while in Dorsetshire, he took some previous steps with a view to quitting his preferment in the church. In the year 1762, upon the appointment of the late Duke of Northumberland to be lord lieutenant of Ireland, he was strongly urged to accept the place of chaplain to his grace; which, from the preference he gave to a retired situation, he declined. An opportunity occurring, the year following, of exchanging his living for that of Catterick in Yorkshire, he made the exchange, for the sake of enjoying the society of Archdeacon Blackburne and his family, who lived in that neighbourhood. On this occasion, Mr. Belsham justly remarks, "It may appear

"singular that Mr. Lindsey could submit to that renewed "subscription which was requisite in order to his induc- "tion to a new living.

"And the case," he adds, "appears the more extra- "ordinary, as many clergymen, who, in consequence of "a revolution in their opinions, had become dissatisfied "with the Articles, would never, for the sake of obtain- "ing the most valuable preferment, subscribe them "again, though, while they were permitted to remain un- "molested, they did not perceive it to be their duty to "retire from the church."—P. 17.

The extreme want of candour and sincerity evinced by such conduct, is very unsatisfactorily apologized for by Mr. Lindsey, and is very gently reproved by Mr. Belsham. The principal plea alleged by Mr. L. in defence of himself is, that as he continued to officiate in the forms of the liturgy, his renewed subscription gave him little concern, since he considered himself, as virtually repeating his subscription. At length, he brought himself, he says, to consider the trinitarian forms in the liturgy, and the invocations at the entrance of the litany, as

"A threefold representation of the one God, the "Father, governing all things by himself and by his Son "and Spirit; and as a threefold way of addressing him "as a Creator, and original benevolent cause of all "things, as Redeemer of mankind by his Son, and their "Sanctifier by his Holy Spirit."—P. 23.

How far he was influenced by mercenary considerations in retaining his station under such circumstances, it is impossible to say; but that he was guilty of much collusion and impious prevarication in this affair, cannot be reasonably doubted. Nor is there any species of simulation or dissimulation in religion, which might not be justified on pretences equally plausible; and when we recollect that Mr. L. persisted in that conduct for a series of years, we shall find it difficult to conceive of him as that prodigy of virtue which Mr. Belsham represents him. "He must be a severe moralist," says Mr. B. "whom such a concession does not satisfy." And what is this

concession, that is to stop every mouth, and to convert censure into praise? We will give it in Mr. L.'s own words: it is this:

"Not," says he, "that I now justify myself therein; "yea, rather I condemn myself. But as I have humble "hope of the divine forgiveness, let not men be too rigid "in their censures."—P. 24.

It is impossible to conceive a confession of conduct extremely criminal, in terms of lighter reprehension; but, agreeably to the theory of Mr. B., the merit of repentance so much exceeds the moral turpitude of transgression, that the faintest indications of it transport him with admiration. For our parts, were we not aware of the tendency of socinianism to produce a most attenuated conception of the evil of sin, we should have expected to find such insincerity and impiety deplored in the strongest language of penitential sorrow. As we wish, however, to do ample justice to the real virtues of Mr. L., we feel a pleasure in quoting the following account of the manner in which he conducted himself while he was rector of Catterick.

"No sooner was he settled," says his biographer, "in "his new situation, than he applied himself with great "assiduity, in his extensive and populous parish, to per- "form the duties of a parochial minister. He regularly "officiated twice on the Sunday in his parish church, "and in the interval between the services he catechised "young people. He visited the sick, he relieved the "poor, he established and supported charity schools for "the children, he spent considerable sums of money in "feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, in provid- "ing medicines for the diseased, and in purchasing and "distributing books for the instruction of the ignorant. "In his domestic arrangements the greatest economy "was observed, that he and his excellent lady might "have the greater surplus to expend in liberality and "charity; for it was a rule with him to lay up nothing "from the income of his living."—P. 26.

This is unquestionably a pleasing picture of the character of an exemplary christian pastor. It does not

appear that any considerable success attended his labours. On this head he contents himself with expressing a faint hope, that some of the seed he had sowed might not be lost.

In this situation he continued ten years, till a dangerous fit of sickness roused his conscience, and rendered his continuance in the discharge of his ecclesiastical functions insupportable. We are far from wishing to depreciate the value of that sacrifice which Mr. Lindsey tardily and reluctantly made to the claims of conscience; but we cannot conceal our surprise, that a measure to which he was forced, in order to quell the apprehensions he most justly entertained of the displeasure of the Almighty, after a system of prevarication persisted in for upwards of ten years, should be extolled in terms which can only be applied with propriety to instances of heroic virtue. To prefer the surrender of certain worldly advantages to a perseverance in conduct highly criminal, evinces a mind not utterly insensible to the force of moral obligation,—and nothing more. Our admiration must be reserved for a higher species of excellence; for an adherence to the side of delicacy and honour, where many plausibilities might be urged to the contrary; or a resolute pursuit of the path of virtue, when it is obstructed by the last extremities of evil. Mr. Lindsey renounced, it is true, a respectable and lucrative situation in the church, rather than continue any longer in the practice of what he considered as idolatry. But he was unincumbered with a family; he possessed some personal property; and enjoyed the friendship of several great and noble personages, who were never likely to suffer him to sink into absolute poverty. He merely descended to the level where many of the best, and some of the greatest of men, have chosen to place themselves, and where his friend Dr. Priestley, whose talents would have commanded any preferment in the church, chose, from an attachment to the same principles, to remain for life. We approve his resignation of his living; but we confess we are more disposed to wonder that he could reconcile him-

self to continue in his situation so long, than that he should feel himself compelled to quit it at last.

This event took place in the year 1773; after which he came to London, and a plan was set on foot for opening a chapel for him in the metropolis, where, retaining the use of a liturgy modified agreeably to his views, he might promulgate the tenets of Socinus. Many persons, Mr. B. informs us, both of the establishment and among the dissenters, aided the undertaking; among whom are particularly enumerated Dr. Priestley, and Dr. Price, Samuel Shore, Esq. of Norton Hall, in Yorkshire, and Robert Newton, Esq. of Norton House, in the same village.

These gentlemen, in conjunction with others, entered into a subscription, to indemnify him for the necessary expenses incurred in procuring and fitting up his chapel. The place fixed upon for this grand experiment was a room in Essex House, Essex Street, which having before been used as an auction-room, was capable, at a moderate expense, of being turned into a convenient place of worship. Here Mr. L. introduced his improved liturgy, formed very much upon the plan of Dr. Clarke's, but with such variations as corresponded to the difference of his views from those of that celebrated divine. From this period the life of Mr. L. proceeds in a very equable and uniform course, with little worthy of remark, besides the various publications to which the system he had adopted gave birth; and over the congregation formed in Essex Street he continued to preside till his seventieth year, when he thought fit to retire from a public station: after which he lived sixteen years, when he was attacked with a disease which was judged to be a pressure on the brain, and expired in the eighty-sixth year of his age. Such are the outlines of a narrative which Mr. Belsham has contrived to extend to upwards of five hundred octavo pages. It is by no means our intention to follow the biographer through his boundless excursions, or to criticise every remark which appears to us justly obnoxious to censure. We shall content ourselves with selecting a few passages, and making a few

observations, which may serve to illustrate the genius and progress of socinianism, the promotion of which evidently appears to be the sole object of the writer of these Memoirs.

The secession of Mr. Lindsey from the established church produced much less impression than might have been expected; nor does it appear that his example was followed by one individual among the clergy, until Mr. Disney, his brother-in-law, after the lapse of some years, adopted the same measure, and afterwards became his colleague in the ministry. The establishment of a socininian chapel with a reformed liturgy in the metropolis. is narrated by our biographer with the utmost pomp, as forming a distinguished epoch in the annals of religion; and, undoubtedly, great hopes were entertained of its producing a memorable revolution among the episcopalians: but these expectations were frustrated. The auditory, composed chiefly of persons of opulence, (among whom the Duke of Grafton made the principal figure,) was at no time very numerous; and no similar society was formed from among the members of the established church in any part of the United Kingdom. The utmost that the efforts of Lindsey, Priestley, and others, effected. was to convert the teachers of arianism among the dissenters into socinians, who exerted themselves with tolerable success to disseminate their principles in their respective congregations: so that the boasted triumphs of socinianism consisted in sinking that section of the dissenting body, which had already departed from the faith, a few degrees lower in the gulf of error. From these very Memoirs under consideration, we derive the most convincing evidence that the tenets of Socinus, with respect to the nation at large, have lost ground, and that the people of England are by no means so favourably disposed to them as formerly. They also present us a very full and particular account of the association of a part of the clergy at the Feathers Tavern, to procure relief in the matter of subscription; for which purpose, agreeably to a resolution of the general body, on the 6th of February, 1772, a petition was presented to the house

of commons. The number of the petitioners amounted to nearly two hundred and fifty, among whom, the names of the celebrated Archdeacon Blackburne, and Law, bishop of Carlisle, were the most distinguished. Of the state of the public mind in the metropolis, we have a striking picture in a letter from John Lee, afterwards solicitor-general, a zealous friend of the discontented clergy. "It will surprise you who live in the country," says he, "and consequently have not been informed of the discoveries of the metropolis, that the christian religion is not thought to be an object worthy of the least regard; and that it is not only the most prudent, but the most virtuous and benevolent thing in the world, to divert men's minds from such frivolous subjects with all the dexterity that can be. This is no exaggeration, I assure you; on the contrary, it seems to be the opinion (and their conduct will show it) of nine-tenths of both houses of parliament!" Allowing for some slight exaggeration arising from the chagrin and vexation of the writer, it is still impossible not to perceive, if any credit is due to his statement, that parliament were not in a disposition to feel any conscientious objections to the repeal of the Articles, and that if they opposed such a measure, that opposition originated simply from the fear of innovation, common to politicians. The manner in which the debate was conducted when the affair came actually under the consideration of the house, confirms this conclusion.

There was not one member who expressed his belief in the Articles: it was treated entirely as a political question, without once adverting to its intrinsic merits, as involving a religious controversy; and Mr. Hans Stanley opposed the bringing up of the petition, as it tended to disturb the peace of the country, which, in his opinion, ought to be the subject of a fortieth Article, which would be well worth all the thirty-nine.* With such levity and contempt was the national creed treated at that time. Will the sturdiest champion of socinianism affirm that

* See pages 54, 55, of these Memoirs.

a similar discussion in the house of commons, or in the upper house, would be conducted in a similar manner at present? or that there would be one member who would contend for the continuance of the Articles on the ground of their intrinsic excellence and verity? The fact is, that through the secularity and irreligion of the clergy, evangelical truth was nearly effaced from the minds of the members of the establishment in the higher ranks, and that an indolent acquiescence in established formularies, had succeeded to the ardour with which the great principles of religion were embraced at the Reformation. Such was the state of the public mind, that in a contest between orthodoxy and heresy, the former proved triumphant, merely because it was already established, and had the plea of antiquity and prescription in its favour. Since that period, vital religion has revived in the national church; the flame of controversy has been widely spread; the inconsistency of socinianism with the Scriptures, together with its genuine tendency and character, have been fully developed; it has lost the attraction of novelty; it has revolted the minds of men by its impiety; and, having been weighed in the balance, it has been found wanting. If among the clergy there still subsist a small remnant who are attached to those unscriptural tenets, they are content with being connived at, and nothing could now urge them to the imprudence of presenting their claims for legal security to the legislature. We hear nothing of an intention to renew the scenes which took place at the Feathers Tavern in 1772.

We consider this as a decisive proof that socinianism has lost ground in the nation, notwithstanding its prevalence in societies of a certain description among the dissenters. Those who never formally renounced the orthodox doctrine, have, in consequence of recent discussions, become more than ever attached to it: while that class of dissenters who were already moving in an heretical direction, have reposed in socinianism as their natural centre of gravity. From several other circumstances recorded in these Memoirs, the same inference may be drawn with respect to the discredit under which

this system lies at present, compared with the countenance and indulgence with which it was received thirty or forty years back. While Mr. Lindsey was deliberating on the propriety of quitting his living, it was suggested to him by Dr. Priestley, that he might continue to officiate, by making such alterations in the public offices of devotion as would accord with his peculiar views. "Nor was there any ground to suspect," says Mr. B., "that he would have met with any molestation from his superiors." Mr. Chambers, who held the living of Oundle, in Northamptonshire, Mr. Disney, for many years, and others, did so, without being called to account for their conduct. We should be sorry to express ourselves with an improper degree of confidence; but we may venture to express a firm persuasion, that such a silent repeal of the doctrine of the church by the mere authority of a parochial minister, would not now be permitted to pass unnoticed, or uncensured, in any part of the kingdom. The dignitaries of the church are alive to the importance of the distinguishing truths of christianity, and would show themselves prompt and eager, as appears from recent instances, to discourage the open disavowal of them. We have no hesitation in asserting, that the hope of rendering the tenets of the Polish heresiarch popular and prevalent throughout this nation, was at no period so completely extinguished as at the present; and from a certain air of despondency which the memorialist of Lindsey betrays, amidst all his gasconades, we are convinced he is of the same opinion. The disposition on all occasions to vaunt of their success, and to predict, with great confidence, the speedy triumph of their principles, is a peculiar feature in the character of modern socinians; and the absurd and exaggerated statements of matters of fact into which this propensity betrays them, are truly ludicrous. All other sorts of euthusiasts of whom we have either heard or read, are, in this respect, cold and phlegmatic compared with them. In various extracts from the letters of Mr. Lindsey's correspondents, and of others, representations are made of numerous and rapid conversions to socinianism, which Mr. B., from a

regard to truth and decency, finds it necessary to correct and apologize for, as the effusion of well-intended but intemperate zeal. The boast of success is almost invariably the precursor of a statement on the part of Mr. B., in which it is either repealed or qualified; and it is but doing him justice to say, that his judgement and experience have exempted him from those illusions and deceptions of which his party have become the easy dupes. We had been confidently informed, for instance, that almost all the people of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts, were becoming socinians, and that the ministers, with the exception of one or two, had already declared themselves such; when it appears, from the unimpeachable authority of Mr. Wells, himself a socinian, and an inhabitant of that city, that there is but one professedly unitarian chapel throughout New England: and so little sanguine is he with respect to the spread of that doctrine, that he strongly deprecates its discussion, from a conviction that it will issue in producing, among the body of the people, a more confirmed attachment to orthodoxy.* It is also worthy of remark, that these extravagant boasts of success, are not accompanied with the slightest advertence to the moral or spiritual effects which the socinian doctrine produces on the character: this is a consideration which rarely, if ever, enters into the mind of its most zealous abettors, who appear to be perfectly satisfied if they can but accomplish a change of sentiment, however inefficacious to all practical purposes. Their converts are merely proselyted to an opinion, without pretending to be converted to God: and if they are not as much injured by the change as the proselytes made by the pharisees of old, it must be ascribed to causes totally distinct from the superior excellence of the tenets which they have embraced. They have been taught to discard the worship of Christ, and to abjure all dependence upon him as a Saviour—an admirable preparation, it must be confessed, for a devout and holy life. Let the abettors of these doctrines produce, if they can, a single instance of a person, who, in consequence of

* See his Letter in the Appendix of the Memoirs.

embracing them, was reclaimed from a vicious to a virtuous life, from a neglect of serious piety to an exemplary discharge of its obligations and duties; and their success, to whatever extent it has been realized, would suggest an argument in their favour deserving some attention. But who is ignorant that among the endless fluctuations of fashions and opinions recorded in the annals of religion, the most absurd and pernicious systems have flourished for a while; and that arianism, for instance, which these men profess to abhor almost as much as orthodoxy, prevailed to such a degree, for years, as to threaten to become the prevalent religion of Christendom?* Socinianism can boast but few converts compared with infidelity; in England, of late, they have gone hand in hand, and their progress has been simultaneous, derived from the same causes, and productive of the same effects. Shall we therefore affirm that infidelity is to be rejected with less confidence, because it possesses in reality that to which socinianism only pretends? When we reflect on the inert and torpid character of socinianism, it is surprising any serious expectation should be entertained of its final triumph. From innumerable passages in these Memoirs, it appears that the far greater number, of those who have embraced it in the established church, have been content to retain their situation; and it is certain that of the two hundred and fifty who joined in the petition for relief in the matter of subscription, Mr. Lindsey was the only person who made any sacrifice of emolument to principle. We find both Mr. Lindsey and Mr. Belsham incessantly reproaching unitarians with timidity, in declining the avowal of their sentiments; and the former remarking, with just indignation, that, amidst the multitudes that concurred in his views, there was but one member of the established church that afforded him any pecuniary aid towards defraying the necessary expenses attendant on the opening of his chapel. The avowal of socinianism among dissenters has rarely been followed by worldly privations; and in the church

* See the Second Book of Sulpicius Severus, chap. 35. "Tum hæresis Arii prorupit *totumque orbem* invecto errore turbaverat."

of England, where such consequences must have ensued, it has not been made. Except in the instances of Lindsey, Jebb, and a very few others, the converts to socinianism have stooped to the meanest prevarication, and the most sacrilegious hypocrisy, rather than sacrifice their worldly emolument and honours. Compare this with the conduct of the puritans, in the reign of Charles the Second, who, though the points at issue were comparatively trifling and insignificant, chose, to the number of two thousand, to encounter every species of obloquy and distress, rather than do violence to their conscience; and learn the difference between the heroism inspired by christian principle, and the base and pusillanimous spirit of heresy. What an infatuation to expect that a system which inspires its votaries with no better sentiments and feelings than are evinced by these decisive facts, will ever become the prevailing belief; a system which, while it militates against every page of revelation, is betrayed by the selfish timidity of its followers! The system of Socinus is a cold negation: the whole secret of it consists in thinking meanly of Christ; and what tendency such a mode of thinking can have to inspire elevation or ardour, it is not easy to comprehend. If it is calculated to relieve the conscience of a weight, which the principles of orthodoxy render it difficult to shake off, without complying with the conditions of the gospel, infidelity answers the same purpose still better, and possesses a still higher degree of simplicity,—meaning by that term what socinians generally mean—the total absence of mystery.

Great part of these Memoirs is occupied in giving a copious analysis of Mr. L.'s publications; which possessing no intrinsic merit, nor having excited more than a temporary interest, it would be trifling with the patience of our readers, to suppose they could derive either entertainment or instruction from seeing them abridged. Of Mr. Lindsey, considered as a writer, it is sufficient to observe, that the measure of intellect he displayed was the most ordinary, and that he was not possessed of the power, in its lowest degree, of either inventing what was

rare, or embellishing what was common. He was perspicuous, because he contented himself, on all occasions, with the most commonplace thoughts; he was simple, because he aspired to nothing more than to convey his meaning in intelligible terms, without the least conception of force, elegance, or harmony. Though his writings are replete with professions of unbounded liberality and candour, it is evident, from his treatment of Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, that he was indulgent only towards those who approached nearer to infidelity than himself. Nothing can be conceived more splenetic and acrimonious than his examination of that ingenious author's Plea for the Divinity of Christ, who, in return for compliments and condescensions, which however unworthy of the cause he was defending, were sufficient to soften a Cerberus, met with nothing but rudeness and insolence. It was truly amusing to see the imbecility of a Lindsey assuming the airs of a Warburton. Throughout the whole of that publication, he affects to consider Mr. Robinson as a mere superficial declaimer; although his friend, Archdeacon Blackburne, Mr. B. informs us, always spoke of the Plea as a most able and unanswerable performance. So much for the modesty of this heretical confessor!

But it is time to leave Mr. L. to that oblivion which is the infallible destiny of him and of his works, and to proceed to make a few remarks on the narrative, and the miscellaneous strictures of his biographer. In the first place, we congratulate him on his abatement of that tone of arrogance which so strikingly characterised his former publications. Not that we ever expect him to exhibit himself in the light of an amiable or unassuming writer, which would be for the Ethiopian to change his skin; but it is with pleasure we remark less insolence and dogmatism than he has displayed on other occasions. He writes like a person who is conscious he is supporting a sinking cause; an air of despondency may be detected amidst his efforts to appear gay and cheerful. He knows perfectly well that he is celebrating the obsequies, not the triumph of socinianism; and from the little advantage it has derived from its former efforts, his vanity will

not prevent him from suspecting that he is giving ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.

In this, as in all his former publications, he evinces a total ignorance of human nature, together with that propensity to overrate the practical effect of metaphysical theories, which almost invariably attaches to metaphysicians of an inferior order. He who invents a metaphysical system, which possesses the least claim to public regard, must have paid a profound attention to the actual constitution of human nature. He must have explored the most delicate and intricate processes of the mind, and kept a vigilant eye on the various phenomena which it presents. He is necessarily *above* his theory, having been conducted to it by an independent effort of thought. He has not adjusted his observations to his hypothesis, but his hypothesis to his observations. The humble disciple, the implicit admirer, proceeds too often in a directly opposite manner. All he knows of the mental constitution, in its more intricate movements, he derives from the system prepared to his hand, which he adopts with all its crudities, and confidently employs as the key which is to unlock all the recesses of nature. Having been accustomed to contemplate the human mind with a constant view to the technical arrangements to which he has devoted himself, he estimates the practical importance of metaphysical theories by what has passed in his own mind. We are fully convinced that the bulk of mankind are very little influenced by metaphysical theories; and that even in minds which are more prone to speculation, metaphysical dogmas are seldom so firmly embraced, or so deeply realized, as to be productive of important practical effects. The advocate of necessity, and the champion of liberty, will, in the same state of moral proficiency, act precisely the same part, in similar circumstances. Mr. Belsham, however, in the plenitude of his enthusiasm for the doctrine of philosophical necessity, ascribes, without hesitation, the ruin of multitudes of young persons to their embracing the opposite tenet. It is truly surprising, that he, who was so quick-sighted as to perceive the tendency of the notion of liberty to promote

immoral conduct, should entertain no suspicion of a similar tendency in the doctrine of God's being the author of sin, which Mr. B. repeatedly asserts.

"The true solution of the first difficulty," says Mr. B., "whether God be the author of sin, appears to be this: "that God is, strictly speaking, the author of evil; but "that, in the first place, he never ordains or permits evil "but with the view to the production of a greater good, "which could not have existed without it. And, secondly, that though God is the author of evil, both natural "and moral, he is not the approver of evil; he does not "delight in it for its own sake; it must be the object of "his aversion, and what he would never permit or endure, if the good he intends could have been accomplished without it. With respect to the justice of "punishment, the best and only philosophical solution "of it is, that, under the divine government, all punishment is remedial. Moral evil is the disease, punishment is the process of cure, of greater or less intensity, "and of longer or shorter duration, in proportion to the "malignity and inveteracy of the malady, but, ultimately, of sovereign efficacy, under the divine government, "to operate a perfect cure; so that those whose vices "have been the means of proving, purifying, and exalting the virtues of others, shall, in the end, share with "them in their virtue and their triumph, and *the impartial justice* and infinite benevolence of the Divine Being "will be made known, adored, and celebrated, through "the whole created universe."—Pp. 323, 324.

The malignant tendency of such representations as the foregoing is so obvious, that it is quite unnecessary to point it out to our readers. How vain are all precautions against sin, if, in all cases, it is produced by the irresistible power of the Deity! And what motive can remain for avoiding it, if it is certain of being ultimately crowned with happiness and glory! The distinction between producing it, and approving of it for its own sake, with which the doctrine is attempted to be palliated, is perfectly futile; for this is ascribing no more to the Deity than must, in justice, be ascribed to the most profligate

of mankind, who never commit sin for its own sake, but purely with a view to certain advantages with which it is connected: and the difference between the two cases arises not from any distinction in the moral character of the proceeding, but simply from the superior comprehension of view with which the conduct of the Deity is accompanied. As the perpetration of vice is, upon this system, a calamity, not a crime, it is but fitting and necessary it should receive a compensation: and for this Mr. B. has provided, by representing the ultimate happiness of such as have been the means of purifying the virtue of others by their vices, as the effect of the impartial justice of the Deity. Persons of this description are, it seems, a species of benefactors; and it is but right they should, in due time, be rewarded. They are the scavengers of the universe; and, having done a great deal of necessary, though dirty, work, they are entitled to commiseration at present, and to proportionable compensation in another state of being. How admirably are these views adapted to promote a horror of sin! What tenderness of conscience, fear of offending, deep humility and penitence, may we expect to find in Mr. Belsham and in his admirers! Doubtless, their eyes are a fountain of tears, which, like Jeremiah, they are incessantly pouring out for those vices and impieties which are the sure and certain pledges of endless felicity!

To expect Mr. B. to write a bulky volume, without intermingling a large portion of infidelity, would be to expect grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles. In the work under consideration, he fully maintains the consistency of his character. He more than insinuates his disbelief of a great, if not the greater, part of the Mosaic history. Mr. Lindsey, having expressed himself in terms of just reprehension with respect to the conduct of those who reject the books of Moses, Mr. B. takes upon him to censure the severity of his friend.

"But surely, if the venerable writer," says he, "had "reconsidered the case with his usual calmness and impartiality, he would have seen that a person may be a "very firm believer in the divine mission and doctrine of

" Christ, and be well satisfied with the general evidence " of the divine legation of Moses, while he at the same " time may entertain very serious doubts, whether the " books commonly attributed to Moses were really written " throughout by him, and whether either the narrative or " the institute exist at present exactly in the form in " which he delivered them."—P. 408.

But, supposing the narrative to be in certain points false, the institution misrepresented and disguised, and the books which we term the Pentateuch the production of some unknown author,—who does not see the impossibility of separating the truth from the falsehood, and of attaching, on any consistent principles, to any part of it, the credit due to a divine communication? The spirit of infidelity evinced in these passages is little different from that which pervades the pages of Bolingbroke and Voltaire. But such is the genuine progress of socinianism: it begins with denying some of the clearest propositions in the New Testament, in order to which its claims to inspiration must be weakened or annulled; whence it proceeds to dispute the authority of the Old, till the whole Bible is virtually set aside as the umpire of controversy. Among the other sublime discoveries to which Mr. B. has been led by a critical investigation of the writings of the New Testament, one is, that the Lord Jesus Christ possesses no authority whatever; or to use a term of his own invention, no *external* authority. Speaking of the Duke of Grafton, he says—

" In a paper dated Jan. 1, 1792, the duke expressed a " belief that the exaltation of Christ to dominion and " authority was the consequence of his submission to " those sufferings which 'were so efficacious, perhaps so " necessary, to his own glory, and to the future happi- " ness of mankind.' His mind seems at this time to " have been perplexed with some obscure notion of the " unscriptural doctrines of meritorious sufferings, and of " the external authority of Jesus Christ; which, how- " ever, he regards as a mystery, which 'it will probably " never be given to man in the present state' to under- " stand, and which therefore 'must consequently be

" ranked among those articles, the belief of which can- " not be necessary to salvation."—P. 327.

Though the apostles have affirmed the exaltation of the Saviour to the government of the universe, in every variety of form which language can supply,—though he himself declared that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth,—his possession of external authority is unblushingly asserted to be an unscriptural tenet. We challenge Mr. B. to invent terms more strongly expressive of the highest dominion and authority, than those which the inspired writers have employed in describing the exaltation of the Saviour. We can regard this assertion of Mr. Belsham's in no other light than as a specimen of that theological audacity which forms the principal feature in that gentleman's character, and which, happily, can have no other effect than to inspire a complete abhorrence of the system which renders such a procedure necessary. We cheerfully accept, however, the concession implied in these daring positions, that the doctrine of the meritorious suffering of Christ is inseparably connected with his exaltation; and as the latter cannot, without the utmost indecency, be denied, the former follows of course. We can annex no other meaning to the epithet *external*, as applied to *authority*, than what might be more clearly expressed by the term *personal*; or, in other words, Mr. B.'s intention is to assert that our Lord possesses no authority whatever, apart from the credit due to his mission and to his doctrine; and that the christian church is in no other sense governed by Christ, than the Jews might be affirmed to be governed by Moses after his decease. It must be obvious, however, to every one, that this is not to explain, but boldly and unequivocally to contradict, the writings of the apostles on this important subject.

We shall close these strictures on Mr. Belsham, by quoting one passage more, which illustrates at once his insufferable arrogance and his servile deference to authority.

" What childish simplicity and ignorance," says he, " does it betray in some, to feign or to feel alarmed at

"the tendency of those doctrines which are avowed by "such men as Lindsey, Priestley, Hartley, and Jebb, "and which are represented by them as lying at the "foundation of all right views of the divine govern- "ment, of all rational piety and virtuous practice, and 'of all rational and substantial consolation! And yet "such persons feel no alarm at the vulgar notion of phi- "losophical liberty, or the power of acting differently in "circumstances precisely similar; a notion, the fond "persuasion of which encourages men to venture into "circumstances of moral danger, and to which thou- "sands of the young and inexperienced especially are "daily falling victims."—P. 394.

The arrogance, folly, and absurdity of this passage, are scarcely to be paralleled, even in the writings of its inimitable author. The most celebrated metaphysicians and reasoners in every age and in every country—Malebranche, Cudworth, Clarke, Butler, Chillingworth, Reid, and innumerable others, who have avowed the strongest apprehensions of the immoral tendency of the doctrine of fatalism, or, as it has been styled, philosophical necessity, are consigned by a writer who has not capacity sufficient to appreciate their powers, much less to rival their productions, to the reproach of childish simplicity and ignorance; and this for no other reason than their presuming to differ in opinion from Lindsey, Priestley, Hartley, and Jebb! What is this but to enjoin implicit faith? And why might not a Roman Catholic, with equal propriety, accuse of childish simplicity and ignorance, those who should suspect the pernicious tendency of sentiments held by Pascal, Fenelon, and Bossuet? We must be permitted to remind Mr. B. that we hold his pretensions to a liberal and independent turn of thought extremely cheap; that, possessing nothing original even in his opinions, to say nothing of his genius, his most vigorous efforts have terminated in his becoming a mere trainbearer in a very insignificant procession.

Having already detained our readers longer on this article than we ought, we should now put a period to our remarks, but that there is one particular connected

with the history of Mr. Lindsey, which we conceive has been too often set in such a light as is calculated to produce erroneous impressions. We refer to the resignation of his living, in deference to his religious scruples. He is, on this account, everywhere designated by Mr. Belsham by the title of "the venerable confessor;" and what is more to be wondered at, the late excellent Job Orton, in a letter to his friend, the late Rev. Mr. Palmer, of Hackney, speaks of him in the following terms:

"'Were I to publish an account of silenced and "ejected ministers, I should be strongly tempted to insert "Mr. Lindsey in the list he mentions in his Apology "with so much veneration. He certainly deserves as "much respect and honour as any of them for the part "he has acted. Perhaps few of them exceeded him in "learning and piety. I venerate him as I would any of "your confessors. As to his particular sentiments, they "are nothing to me. An honest, pious man, who makes "such a sacrifice to truth and conscience as he has done, "is a glorious character, and deserves the respect, esteem, "and veneration of every true christian.'"

We have no scruple in asserting that this unqualified encomium is repugnant to reason, to scripture, and to the sentiments of the best and purest ages of the christian church. To pass over the absurdity of denominating Mr. L. a silenced and ejected minister, merely on account of his voluntary withdrawment from a community whose distinguishing tenets he had abandoned, we are far from conceiving that the merit attached to his conduct on this occasion was of such an order as to entitle him for a moment to rank with confessors and martyrs. To the praise of manly integrity, for quitting a situation he could no longer conscientiously retain, we are ready to acknowledge Mr. L. fully entitled. We are cordially disposed to admire integrity wherever we perceive it; and we admire it the more in the present instance, because such examples of it, among beneficed ecclesiastics, have been rare. But we cannot permit ourselves to place sacrifices to error on the same footing as sacrifices to truth, without annihilating their distinction. If re-

vealed truth possess any thing of sanctity and importance, the profession of it must be more meritorious than the profession of its opposite; and, by consequence, sacrifices made to that profession must be more estimable. He who suffers in the cause of truth is entitled to our admiration; he who suffers in the defence of error and delusion, to our commiseration: which are unquestionably very different sentiments. If truth is calculated to elevate and sanctify the character, he who cheerfully sacrifices his worldly emolument to its pursuit, must be supposed to have partaken in no common degree of its salutary operation. He who suffers equal privations in the propagation of error, evinces, it is confessed, his possession of moral honesty; but unless persuasion could convert error into truth, it is impossible it should impart to error the effects of truth. Previous to the profession of any tenets whatever, there lies an obligation on all, to whom the light of the gospel extends, to believe the truth. We are bound to confess Christ before men, only because we are bound to believe on him. But if, instead of believing on him, we deny him in his essential characters, which is the case with socinians, the sincerity of that denial will indeed rescue us from the guilt of prevarication, but not from that of unbelief. It is possible, at least, since some sort of faith in Christ is positively asserted to be essential to salvation, that the tenets of the socinians may be such as to exclude that faith: that it does exclude it, no orthodox man can consistently deny; and how absurd it were to suppose a man should be entitled to the reward of a christian confessor, merely for denying, *bona fide*, the doctrine which is essential to salvation! The sincerity which accompanies his profession entitles him to the reward of a confessor: the error of the doctrine which he professes exposes him at the same time to the sentence of condemnation as an unbeliever! If we lose sight of socinianism for a moment, and suppose an unbeliever in christianity, *in toto*, to suffer for the voluntary and sincere promulgation of his tenets, we would ask Mr. Orton in what rank he would be inclined to place his infidel confessor. Is *he*

entitled to rank with *any* of the confessors? If he is, our Saviour's terms of salvation are essentially altered; and though he pronounces an anathema on him who shall deny him before men, the sturdy and unshaken denial of him in the face of worldly discouragement, would answer, it seems, as well as a similar confession. Men are left at their liberty in this respect; and they are equally secure of eternal happiness, whether they deny or whether they confess the Saviour, providing they do it firmly and sincerely. If these consequences appear shocking, and he be forced to assert the negative, then it is admitted that the truth of the doctrine confessed enters essentially into the inquiry, whether he who suffers for his opinions, is to be, *ipso facto*, classed with christian confessors. Let it be remembered that we are not denying, that he who hazards his worldly interest rather than conceal or dissemble his tenets, how false or dangerous soever they may be, is an honest man, and, *quoad hoc*, acts a virtuous part,—but that he is entitled to the same kind of approbation with the champion of truth. That the view we have taken of the subject is consonant to the Scriptures, will not be doubted by those who recollect that St. John rests his attachment to Gaius and to the elect Lady, on the truth which dwelt in them; that he professed no christian attachment but for the truth's sake; and that he forbade christians to exercise hospitality, or to show the least indication of friendship, to those who taught any other doctrine than that which he and his fellow-apostles had taught. The source of the confusion and absurdity which necessarily attach to the opinions of Mr. Orton and others, here expressed on this subject, consists in their confounding together moral sincerity and christian piety. We are perfectly willing to admit that the latter cannot subsist without the former; but we are equally certain that the former is by no means so comprehensive as necessarily to include the latter. We should have imagined it unnecessary to enter into an elaborate defence of so plain a position as this, that it is one thing to be what the world styles an honest man, and another to be a christian—a distinction, obvious

as it is, sufficient to solve the whole mystery, and to account for the conduct of Mr. L., without adopting the unmeaning jargon of his biographer, who styles him, in innumerable places, the *venerable confessor*. How repugnant the language we have been endeavouring to expose, is to that which was held in the purest and best ages of the church, must be obvious to all who are competently acquainted with ecclesiastical history. The Marcionites, we are informed by Eusebius, boasted of their having furnished a multitude of martyrs; but they were not the less on that account considered as deniers of Christ. Hence, when orthodox christians happened occasionally to meet at the places of martyrdom with Montanists and Manichæans, they refused to hold the least communion with them, lest they should be supposed to consent to their errors.* In a word, the *nature* of the doctrine professed must be taken into consideration, before we can determine that profession to be a christian profession; nor is martyrdom entitled to the high veneration justly bestowed on acts of heroic piety, on any other ground than its being, what the term imports, an *attestation of the truth*. It is the saint which makes the martyr, not the martyr the saint.

* Euseb. lib. 5, c. 14.

REVIEW

OF

BIRT ON POPERY.

A Summary of the Principles and History of Popery, in Five Lectures, on the Pretensions and Abuses of the Church of Rome. By JOHN BIRT. 8vo. pp. 176. 1823.

AT a time when popery is making rapid strides, and protestants in general have lost the zeal which once animated them, we consider the publication we have just announced as peculiarly seasonable. What may be the ultimate effect of the efforts made by the adherents of the church of Rome to propagate its tenets, aided by the apathy of the opposite party, it is not for us to conjecture. Certain it is, there never was a period when the members of the papal community were so active and enterprising, or protestants so torpid and indifferent. Innumerable symptoms appear of a prevailing disposition to contemplate the doctrines of popery with less disgust, and to witness their progress with less alarm, than has ever been known since the Reformation. All the zeal and activity are on one side; and, while every absurdity is retained, and every pretension defended, which formerly drew upon popery the indignation and abhorrence of all enlightened christians, we should be ready to conclude, from the altered state of public feeling, that a system once so obnoxious had undergone some momentous revolution. We seem, on this occasion, to have interpreted, in its most literal sense, the injunction of "hoping all things, and believing all things." We persist in maintaining that the adherents

to popery are materially changed, in contradiction to their express disavowal: and while they make a boast of the infallibility of their creed, and the unalterable nature of their religion, we persist in the belief of its having experienced we know not what melioration and improvement. In most instances, when men are deceived, it is the effect of art and contrivance on the part of those who delude them; in this, the deception originates with ourselves; and, instead of bearing *false* witness against our neighbour, such is the excess of our candour, that we refuse to credit the unfavourable testimony which he bears of himself.

There is, in the mean time, nothing reciprocal in this strange method of proceeding: we pipe to them, but they will not dance. Our concessions, instead of softening and mollifying, seem to have no other effect upon them, than to elate their pride and augment their arrogance.

An equal change in the state of feeling towards an object which has itself undergone no alteration whatever, and where the party by which it is displayed profess to adhere to their ancient tenets, it would be difficult to specify. To inquire into the causes of this singular phenomenon, would lead to discussion foreign to our present purpose. Let it suffice to remark, that it may partly be ascribed to the length of time which has elapsed since we have had actual experience of the enormous cruelties of the papal system, and to the fancied security we possess against their recurrence; partly to the agitation of a great political question, which seems to have had the effect of identifying the cause of popery with that of protestant dissenters. The impression of the past has in a manner spent itself; and, in many, its place is occupied by an eagerness to grasp at present advantages, and to lay hold of every expedient for shaking off the restraints which a narrow and timid policy has imposed. The influence of these circumstances has been much aided by that indifference to religious truth which too often shelters itself under the mask of candour: and to such an extent has this humour been

carried, that distinguished leaders in parliament have not scrupled to represent the controversy between the papists and the protestants as turning on obscure and unintelligible points of doctrine, scarcely worth the attention of enlightened minds; while a beneficed clergyman of some distinction has treated the whole subject as of no more importance than the idle disputes agitated by the schoolmen. It was but a few years since, that a celebrated nobleman, in the house of peers, vehemently condemned the oath of abjuration for applying the term *superstitious* to the doctrine of transubstantiation. In exactly the same spirit the appellation of papist is exchanged for catholic,—a concession which the adherents of the church of Rome well know how to improve, as amounting to little short of a formal surrender of the point at issue. For, if the papists are really entitled to the name of *catholics*, protestants of every denomination are involved in the guilt of schism.

This revolution in the feelings of a great portion of the public, has probably been not a little promoted by another cause. The present times are eminently distinguished by the efforts employed for the extension of vital religion: each denomination of christians has taken its station and contributed its part towards the diffusion of evangelical sentiments. The consequence has been, that the professors of serious piety are multiplied, and form at present a very conspicuous branch of the community. The space which they occupy in the minds of the public, is not merely proportioned to their numerical importance, still less to their rank in society: it is, in a great measure, derived from the publicity of their proceedings, and the numerous associations for the promotion of pious and benevolent objects, which they have originated and supported. By these means, their discriminating doctrines, essential to vital piety, have become better known and more fully discussed than heretofore. However beneficial, as to its general effects, such a state of things may have been, one consequence, which might be expected, has been the result. The opposition of the enemies of religion has become more virulent, their

hatred more heated and inflamed; and they have turned with no small complacency to the contemplation of a system which forms a striking contrast to the object of their detestation. Popery, in the ordinary state of its profession, combines the "form of godliness" with a total denial of its power. A heap of unmeaning ceremonies, adapted to fascinate the imagination and engage the senses,—implicit faith in human authority, combined with an utter neglect of divine teaching,—ignorance the most profound, joined to dogmatism the most presumptuous, — a vigilant exclusion of biblical knowledge, together with a total extinction of free inquiry,—present the spectacle of religion lying in state, surrounded with the silent pomp of death. The very absurdities of such a religion render it less unacceptable to men whose decided hostility to truth inclines them to view with complacency whatever obscures its beauty or impedes its operation. Of all the corruptions of christianity which have prevailed to any considerable extent, popery presents the most numerous points of contrast to the simple doctrines of the gospel; and just in proportion as it gains ground, the religion of Christ must decline.

On these accounts, though we are far from supposing that popery, were it triumphant, would allow toleration to any denomination of protestants, we have the utmost confidence that the professors of evangelical piety would be its first victims. The party most opposed to them look to papists as their natural ally, on whose assistance, in the suppression of what they are pleased to denominate fanaticism and enthusiasm, they may always depend: they may, therefore, without presumption, promise themselves the distinction conferred on Ulysses ---that of being last devoured.

Whether popery will ever be permitted, in the inscrutable counsels of heaven, again to darken and overspread the land, is an inquiry in which it is foreign from our province to engage. It is certain that the members of the Romish community are at this moment on the tip-toe of expectation, indulging the most sanguine hopes, suggested by the temper of the times, of soon

recovering all that they have lost, and of seeing the pretended rights of their church restored in their full splendour. If any thing can realize such an expectation, it is, undoubtedly, the torpor and indifference of protestants, combined with the incredible zeal and activity of papists; and universal observation shows what these are capable of effecting---how often they compensate the disadvantages arising from paucity of number, as well as almost every other kind of inequality.

From a settled persuasion that popery still is what it always was---a detestable system of impiety, cruelty, and imposture, fabricated by the father of lies---we feel thankful at witnessing any judicious attempt to expose its enormities and retard its progress. The Lectures, published some years since, by Dr. Fletcher, are well adapted for this purpose, and entitle their excellent author to the esteem and gratitude of the public. The Protestant, a series of periodical papers, composed by Mr. M'Gavin, of Glasgow, contains the fullest delineation of the popish system, and the most powerful confutation of its principles, in a popular style, of any work we have seen. Whoever wishes to see popery drawn to the life, in its hideous wickedness and deformity, will find abundant satisfaction in the pages of that writer.

The author before us has been studious of conciseness, and has contented himself with exhibiting a brief, but a very correct and impressive outline of that copious subject. As these Lectures were delivered at Manchester, it is probable the author's attention was more immediately directed to it, by witnessing the alarming progress which the tenets of the Romish church are making in that quarter. There is nothing in them, however, of a local nature, or which is calculated to limit their usefulness to any particular part of the kingdom. They are adapted for universal perusal, and entitled to an extensive circulation.

The first Lecture is on the claim of the church of Rome to the appellation of *catholic*, the futility and absurdity of which the author has exposed, in a concise, but highly satisfactory manner. On this part of the

argument, he very acutely remarks, that "no church, "which is not coeval with christianity itself, ought to "pretend to be the universal christian church.

"The contrary sentiment is evidently unreasonable and "absurd; for it supposes, that something which has "already a distinct and complete existence, may be a "part of something else which is not to come into being "until a future period; or, which is equivalent to this, "that what is entirely the creation of to-day, may include "that which was created yesterday. This would be in "opposition to all analogy; and, therefore, if the church "of Rome had not an earlier commencement than all "other christian churches,—if the origin of that church "be not coincident and simultaneous with the first mo-"ment of christianity,—then the pretension of the "church of Rome to be the 'catholic church' is alto-"gether vain. Now, it is clear, from the Acts of the "Apostles, that many christian churches flourished in the "East, before the gospel was even preached at Rome. "It was enjoined on the apostles, that their ministry "should begin at Jerusalem; and in that city the first "christian church was actually constituted. Until the "persecution which arose about the stoning of Stephen, "Christ was not preached beyond the borders of Pales-"tine, and even then, with a scrupulous discrimination, "'to the Jews only.' In fact, churches were formed in "Jerusalem and Judea, at Damascus and Antioch, and "the gospel was sent even into Ethiopia, before there is "any evidence of its being known at Rome."—Pp. 10, 11.

The second Lecture is an historical exposition of the principal events which led to the elevation of the church of Rome to supremacy: in tracing these, much acumen is evinced, as well as an intimate acquaintance with ecclesiastical history.

The third Lecture consists of a masterly delineation of the genius and characteristics of the papal ascendancy. In this part of the work, the judicious author enters deeply into the interior spirit of popery. After setting in a striking light the seeming impossibilities it had to

encounter ere it could accomplish its object, he enumerates the expedients employed for this purpose, under the following heads. The votaries of the papal see succeeded: 1. By enslaving the mental faculties to human authority.—2. By giving to superstition the semblance and sanction of religion.—3. By administering the affairs of their government on the corruptest principles of worldly policy. Each of these topics is illustrated with great judgement, and a copious induction of facts. On the last of these heads, we beg leave to present to our readers the following extract, as a specimen of the style and spirit of this writer.

"'My kingdom is *not* of this world,' saith our Lord; "'My kingdom *is* of this world,' is truly the sentiment "of the pope; and here lies the difference. The only "consistent view of this church, is that of a political "establishment, employing, indeed, religious terms and "denominations, but only as the pretext and colour of "an inordinate pursuit of secular and temporal objects. "Read its history as that of a christian church; you "stumble at every step, and every period shocks you "with the grossest incongruities: read the same history "as one of the kingdoms of this world; all is natural "and easy, and the various proceedings and events are "just what you are prepared to expect. The papal "supremacy was conceded by an earthly monarch; all "its interests have varied with the fluctuations of human "affairs; and when the princes of this world shall with-"draw their support, it will fall, and 'great will be the "fall thereof.' The bishops of Rome have ever pursued, "under the guise of religion, some earthly advantage; "and thus Pope Leo the Tenth exclaimed most appro-"priately, 'O, how profitable has this fable of Jesus "been unto us!'

"The first object of these subtle politicians, was to "provide a revenue, ample and permanent. Kings and "nations were accordingly laid under tribute; and to the "utmost extent of papal influence, the treasures of "Christendom flowed into the exchequer of Rome. On "every hand, art, fraud, and intimidation, were equally

" and successfully employed, in transferring the wealth " of the world to the coffers of the church.

" This was effected partly by regular ecclesiastical " taxes, but principally by selling every thing the church " of Rome had to bestow, and by perpetually inventing " new articles of bargain and sale. Hence the multiply- " ing of sacraments; hence the sale of pardons, in- " dulgences, benefices, dignities, and of prayers for the " living and the dead. Every thing was prostituted; " and under the pretence of being the 'bride, the Lamb's " wife,' this church became the 'mother of harlots.' In " the same spirit, the death-beds of the rich were be- " sieged, that they might bequeath their property to the " clergy; and the consciences of opulent criminals were " appeased, in return for liberal donations to ecclesiastical " funds. Thus an amount of riches almost incredible " accrued to the papal treasury."—Pp. 94—96.

The fourth Lecture is occupied by giving a rapid sketch of the most interesting events in the past history of the Romish community. We have seldom, if ever, seen so large a body of facts exhibited with perfect perspicuity within so small a compass: the author's complete mastery of the subject appears from the ease with which he has condensed an immense mass of historical matter, without the least indication of disorder or confusion.

The last of these lectures presents an animated and instructive view of the prospects which are opening on the christian church, and the probable issue of the causes and events which are in present operation.

The notice we have taken of this publication will, we trust, induce our readers to avail themselves of the instruction and the pleasure which an attentive perusal cannot fail to bestow. It is distinguished for precision and comprehension of thought, energy of diction, and the most enlarged and enlightened principles of civil and religious freedom; nor should we find it easy to name a publication, which contains, within the same compass, so much information on the subject which it professes to treat. A little redundance of ornament,

and excess in the employment of figurative language, are excrescences very pardonable in a young writer, and which more mature years and experience may be safely left to correct. On the whole, we cannot dismiss the work before us, without sincerely congratulating the author on that happy combination of philosophical discrimination with christian piety, which it throughout displays.

END OF VOL. II.

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THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

AND A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER AND WRITINGS.

Originally published in Six Volumes, 8vo.

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.

LATE PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.

VOL. III.

WORKS ON TERMS OF COMMUNION.

LONDON:

HENRY G. BOHN, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

	Page
On Terms of Communion	1
Preface	3
Introductory Remarks	7
PART I.	
Arguments for Strict Communion considered	14
SECTION I.	
The Argument from the Order of Time in which Baptism and the Lord Supper are supposed to have been instituted	*ib.*
SECTION II.	
The Argument for Strict Communion, from the Order of Words in the Apostlic Commission, considered	31
SECTION III.	
The Argument from Apostolic Precedent, and from the different Significations of the two Institutions, considered	39
SECTION IV.	
Our supposed Opposition to the Universal Suffrages of the Church, considered	50

79502

PART II.

Page

The Positive Grounds on which we justify the Practice of Mixed Communion 58

SECTION I.

Free Communion urged, from the obligation of Brotherly Love . . . . . *ib.*

SECTION II.

The Practice of Open Communion argued, from the express Injunction of Scripture respecting the Conduct to be maintained by sincere Christians who differ in their Religious Sentiments 63

SECTION III.

Pædobaptists a part of the true Church, and their Exclusion on that account Unlawful 74

SECTION IV.

The Exclusion of Pædobaptists from the Lord's Table considered as a Punishment 83

SECTION V.

On the Impossibility of reducing the Practice of Strict Communion to any general Principle . . . 93

SECTION VI.

The Impolicy of the Practice of Strict Communion considered 104

POSTSCRIPT 119

ON THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN BAPTISM AND THE BAPTISM OF JOHN 123

Preface 125

A REPLY TO THE REV. JOSEPH KINGHORN, BEING A FURTHER VINDICATION OF THE PRACTICE OF FREE COMMUNION 165

Preface 167

PART I.

Page

The Fundamental Position; or, the supposed necessary Connexion between the two positive Institutes of Christianity, examined 173

CHAP. I.

Remarks on Mr. Kinghorn's Statement of the Controversy 178

CHAP. II.

His Attempt to establish the Connexion contended for, from the Apostolic Commission and Primitive Precedent 186

CHAP. III.

The supposed necessary Connexion betwixt the two positive Institutes farther discussed, wherein other Arguments are examined 212

PART II.

The Collateral Topics introduced by Mr. Kinghorn, considered 232

CHAP. IV.

The Charge of dispensing with a Christian Ordinance, considered . . . . . *ib.*

CHAP. V.

An Inquiry how far the Practice of mixed Communion affects the Grounds of Dissent from the Church of England, and from the Church of Rome . . . 242

CHAP. VI.

The Propriety of appealing, in this Controversy, to the peculiar Principles of the Pædobaptists, briefly examined and discussed . . . 256

PART III. Page

In which the Insufficiency of the Reply Mr. Kinghorn has made to the principal Arguments urged for mixed Communion is exposed 265

CHAP. VII.

His Reply to the Argument deduced from the Scriptural Injunction of Mutual Forbearance and Brotherly Love, considered . . . . . *ib.*

CHAP. VIII.

On the Argument for Mixed Communion, founded on the Pædobaptists being a part of the true Church . 286

CHAP. IX.

The Injustice of the Exclusion of other Denominations considered as a Punishment 292

CHAP. X.

On the Contrariety of the Maxims and Sentiments of the Advocates of Strict Communion, to those which prevailed in the early Ages; in which the Innovation imputed to them by the Author is vindicated from the Charge of Misrepresentation 303

CHAP. XI.

Conclusion 321

A SHORT STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN IN OPPOSITION TO PARTY COMMUNION . . . 341

Preface 343

"What charter hath Christ given the church to bind men up to, more than himself hath done? or to exclude those from her society who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from communion with his church, whom he will vouchsafe not only crowns of glory to, but it may be *aureolæ* too, if there be any such things there? The grand commission the apostles were sent out with, was only *to teach what Christ had commanded them.* Not the least intimation of any power given them to impose or require any thing beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God."—STILLINGFLEET; IRENICUM.

ON

TERMS OF COMMUNION,

WITH A

PARTICULAR VIEW TO THE CASE

OF

THE BAPTISTS AND PÆDOBAPTISTS.

[PUBLISHED IN 1815]

PREFACE.

THE love of controversy was in no degree the motive for writing the following sheets. Controversy the writer considers as an evil, though often a necessary one. It is to be deprecated when it is directed to minute or frivolous objects, or when it is managed in such a manner as to call forth malevolent passions He hopes the ensuing treatise will be found free from both these objections, and that, as the subject must be allowed to be of some importance, so the spirit in which it is handled is not chargeable with any material departure from the christian temper. If the author has expressed himself on some occasions with considerable confidence, he trusts the reader will impute it, not to a forgetfulness of his personal deficiencies, but to the cause he has undertaken to support. The divided state of the christian world has long been the subject of painful reflection; and if his feeble efforts might be the means of uniting a small portion only of it in closer ties, he will feel himself amply rewarded.

The practice of incorporating private opinions and human inventions with the constitution of a church, and with the terms of communion, has long appeared to him untenable in its principle, and pernicious in its effects. There is no position in the whole compass of theology, of the truth of which he feels a stronger persuasion, than that no man, or set of men, are entitled to prescribe, as an indispensable condition of communion, what the New Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation. To establish this position is the principal object of the following work; and though it is more immediately occupied in the discussion of a case which respects the

baptists and pædobaptists, that case is attempted to be decided entirely upon the principle now mentioned, and is no more than the application of it to a particular instance.

The writer is persuaded that a departure from this principle, in the denomination to which he belongs, has been extremely injurious, not only to the credit and prosperity of that particular body, (which is a very subordinate consideration,) but to the general interests of truth; and that, but for the obstruction arising from that quarter, the views they entertain of one of the sacraments would have obtained a more extensive prevalence. By keeping themselves in a state of separation and seclusion from other christians, they have not only evinced an inattention to some of the most important injunctions of scripture, but have raised up an invincible barrier to the propagation of their sentiments beyond the precincts of their own party.

It has been insinuated that the author has taken an unfair advantage of his opponents, by choosing to bring forward this disquisition just at the moment when we have to lament the loss of a person whose judgement would have disposed, and his abilities enabled him to do ample justice to the opposite side of the question. He can assure his readers, that none entertained a higher veneration for Mr. Fuller than himself, notwithstanding their difference of sentiment on this subject; and that, when he entered on this discussion, it was with the fullest expectation of having his opposition to encounter. At that time his state of health, though not good, was such as suggested a hope that the event was very distant which we all deplore.

Having been led to mention this affecting circumstance, I cannot refrain from expressing in a few words the sentiments of affectionate veneration with which I also regarded that excellent person while living, and cherish his memory now that he is no more: a man, whose sagacity enabled him to penetrate to the depth of every subject he explored, whose conceptions were so powerful and luminous, that what was recondite and

original appeared familiar; what was intricate, easy and perspicuous in his hands; equally successful in enforcing the practical, in stating the theoretical, and discussing the polemical branches of theology: without the advantage of early education, he rose to high distinction amongst the religious writers of his day, and, in the midst of a most active and laborious life, left monuments of his piety and genius which will survive to distant posterity. Were I making his eulogium, I should necessarily dwell on the spotless integrity of his private life, his fidelity in friendship, his neglect of self-interest, his ardent attachment to truth, and especially the series of unceasing labours and exertions in superintending the mission to India, to which he most probably fell a victim. He had nothing feeble or undecisive in his character, but to every undertaking in which he engaged, he brought all the powers of his understanding, all the energies of his heart; and if he were less distinguished by the comprehension, than the acumen and solidity of his thoughts; less eminent for the gentler graces, than for stern integrity and native grandeur of mind, we have only to remember the necessary limitations of human excellence. While he endeared himself to his denomination by a long course of most useful labour; by his excellent works on the socinian and deistical controversies, as well as his devotion to the cause of missions, he laid the world under lasting obligations. Though he was known to profess different views from the writer on the subject under present discussion, it may be inferred from a *decisive fact*, which it is not necessary to record, that his attachment to them was not very strong, nor his conviction probably very powerful. Be this as it may, his sanction of the practice of exclusive communion has no doubt contributed, in no small degree, to recommend it to the denomination of which he was so distinguished an ornament. They who are the first to disclaim human authority in the affairs of religion, are not always least susceptible of its influence.

It is observable also, that bodies of men are very slow in changing their opinions; which, with some inconve-

niencies, is productive of this advantage, that truth undergoes a severer investigation, and her conquests are the more permanent for being gradually acquired. On this account, the writer is not so sanguine as to expect his performance will occasion any sudden revolution in the sentiments and practice of the class of christians more immediately concerned; if, along with other causes, it ultimately contribute to so desirable an end, he will be satisfied.

It may not be improper to assign the reason for not noticing the treatise of the celebrated Mr. Robinson, of Cambridge, on the same subject. It is not because he is insensible to the ingenuity and beauty of that performance, as well as of the other works of that original and extraordinary writer; but because it rests on principles more lax and latitudinarian than it is in his power conscientiously to adopt; Mr. R. not having adverted, as far as he perceives, to the distinction of fundamentals, but constructed his plea for toleration* in such a manner as to comprehend all the varieties of religious belief.

The only author I have professed to answer is the late venerable Booth, his treatise being generally considered by our opponents as the ablest defence of their hypothesis.

I have only to add, that I commit the following treatise to the candour of the public, and the blessing of God; hoping that, as it is designed not to excite but to allay animosities, not to widen but to heal the breaches among christians, it will meet with the indulgence due to good intentions, however feebly executed.

* The intelligent reader will understand me to refer, not to civil toleration by the state, but to that which is exercised by religious societies.

ON TERMS OF COMMUNION.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

WHOEVER forms his ideas of the Church of Christ from an attentive perusal of the New Testament, will perceive that *unity* is one of its most essential characteristics; and that, though it be branched out into many distinct societies, it is still but one. "The Church," says Cyprian, "is one, which by reason of its fecundity is extended into a multitude, in the same manner as the rays of the sun, however numerous, constitute but one light; and the branches of a tree, however many, are attached to one trunk, which is supported by its tenacious root; and when various rivers flow from the same fountain, though number is diffused by the redundant supply of waters, unity is preserved in their origin." Nothing more abhorrent from the principles and maxims of the sacred oracles can be conceived, than the idea of a plurality of true churches, neither in actual communion with each other, nor in a capacity for such communion. Though this rending of the seamless garment of our Saviour, this schism in the members of his mystical body, is by far the greatest calamity which has befallen the christian interest, and one of the most fatal effects of the great apostasy foretold by the sacred penmen, we have been so long familiarized to it as to be scarcely sensible of its enormity; nor does it excite surprise or concern, in any degree proportioned to what would be felt by one who had contemplated the church in the first ages. Christian societies, regarding each other with the jealousies of rival empires, each aiming to raise itself on the ruin of all others, making extravagant boasts of superior purity, generally in exact proportion to their departures from it, and scarcely deigning to

acknowledge the possibility of obtaining salvation out of their pale, form the odious and disgusting spectacle which modern christianity presents. The bond of charity, which unites the genuine followers of Christ in distinction from the world, is dissolved, and the very terms by which it was wont to be denoted, exclusively employed to express a predilection for a sect. The evils which result from this state of division are incalculable: it supplies infidels with their most plausible topics of invective; it hardens the consciences of the irreligious, weakens the hands of the good, impedes the efficacy of prayer, and is probably the principal obstruction to that ample diffusion of the Spirit which is essential to the renovation of the world.

It is easier, however, it is confessed, to deplore the malady, than to prescribe the cure: for, however important the preservation of harmony and peace, the interests of truth and holiness are still more so; nor must we forget the order in which the graces of the Spirit are arranged. "The wisdom which is from above is first *pure*, then *peaceable*." Peace should be anxiously sought, but always in subordination to purity; and therefore every attempt to reconcile the differences among christians which involves the sacrifice of truth, or the least deliberate deviation from the revealed will of Christ, is spurious in its origin, and dangerous in its tendency. If communion with a christian society cannot be had without a compliance with rites and usages which we deem idolatrous or superstitious, or without a surrender of that liberty in which we are commanded to stand fast, we must, as we value our allegiance, forego, however reluctantly, the advantages of such a union. Wherever purity and simplicity of worship are violated by the heterogeneous mixture of human inventions, we are not at liberty to comply with them for the sake of peace, because the first consideration, in every act of worship, is its correspondence with the revealed will of God, which will often justify us in declining the *external* communion of a church with which we cease not to cultivate a communion in spirit. It is one thing to decline a connexion with the members of a community *absolutely*, or simply because they belong to such a community, and another to join with them in practices which we deem superstitious and erroneous. In the latter instance, we cannot be said absolutely to refuse a connexion with the pious part of such societies, we decline it merely because it is clogged with conditions which render it impracticable. It is impossible for a protestant dissenter, for example, without manifest inconsistency, to become a member of the established church; but to admit the members of that community to participate at the Lord's table, without demanding a formal renunciation of their peculiar sentiments, includes nothing contradictory or repugnant. The cases are totally distinct, and the reasons which would apply forcibly against the former, would be irrelevant to the latter. In the first supposition, the dissenter, by an active concurrence in what he professes to disapprove, ceases to dissent; in the last, no principle is violated, no practice is altered, no innovation is introduced.

Hence arises a question, how far we are justified in repelling from our communion those from whom we differ on matters confessedly not essential to salvation, when that communion is accompanied with no innovation in the rites of worship, merely on account of a diversity of sentiment on other subjects. In other words, are we at liberty, or are we not, to walk with our christian brethren, *as far as we are agreed*, or must we renounce their fellowship on account of error allowed not to be fundamental, although nothing is proposed to be done, or omitted, in such acts of communion, which would not equally be done, or omitted, on the supposition of their absence. Such is the precise state of the question which it is my intention to discuss in these pages; and it may possibly contribute to its elucidation to observe, that the true idea of christian communion is by no means confined to a joint participation of the Lord's supper. He who, in the words of the apostles' creed, expresses his belief in the *communion of saints*, adverts to much more than is comprehended in one par-

ticular act. In an intelligent assent to that article, is comprehended the total of that sympathy and affection, with all its natural expressions and effects, by which the followers of Christ are united, in consequence of their union with their Head, and their joint share in the common salvation. The kiss of charity in the apostolic age, the right hand of fellowship, a share in the oblations of the church, a commendatory epistle attesting the exemplary character of the bearer, uniting in social prayer, the employment of the term brother or sister to denote spiritual consanguinity, were all considered in the purest ages as tokens of *communion;* a term which is never applied in the New Testament exclusively to the Lord's supper. When it is used in connexion with that rite, it is employed, not to denote the fellowship of christians, but the spiritual participation of the body and blood of Christ.*

When we engage a christian brother to present supplications to God in our behalf, it cannot be doubted that we have fellowship with him, not less real or spiritual than at the Lord's table. From these considerations it is natural to infer, that no scruple ought to be entertained respecting the lawfulness of uniting to commemorate our Saviour's death, with those with whom we feel ourselves at liberty to join in every other branch of religious worship. Where no attempt is made to obscure its import, or impair its simplicity, by the introduction of human ceremonies, but it is proposed to be celebrated in the manner which we apprehend to be perfectly consonant to the mind of Christ, it would seem less reasonable to refuse to co-operate in this branch of religion than in any other, because it is appointed to be a memorial of the greatest instance of love that was ever exhibited, as well as the principal pledge of christian fraternity. It must appear surprising that the rite, which, of all others, is most adapted to cement mutual attachment, and which is in a great measure appointed for that purpose, should be fixed upon as the line of demarcation, the impassable barrier, to separate and disjoin the followers of Christ.

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

He who admits his fellow-christian to share in every other spiritual privilege, while he prohibits his approach to the Lord's table, entertains a view of that institution diametrically opposite to what has usually prevailed; he must consider it, not so much in the light of a commemoration of his Saviour's death and passion, as a religious test, designed to ascertain and establish an agreement in points not fundamental. According to this notion of it, it is no longer a symbol of our common christianity, it is the badge and criterion of a party, a mark of discrimination applied to distinguish the nicer shades of difference among christians. How far either scripture or reason can be adduced in support of such a view of the subject, it will be the business of the following pages to inquire.

In the mean while, it will be necessary, in order to render the argument perfectly intelligible, to premise a few words respecting the particular controversy on which the ensuing observations are meant especially to bear. Few of my readers probably require to be informed, that there is a class of christians pretty widely diffused through these realms, who deny the validity of infant baptism, considering it as a human invention, not countenanced by the Scriptures, nor by the practice of the first and purest ages. Besides their denial of the right of infants to baptism, they also contend for the exclusive validity of immersion in that ordinance, in distinction from the sprinkling or pouring of water. In support of the former, they allege the total silence of scripture, respecting the baptism of infants, together with their incompetence to comprehend the truths, or sustain the engagements, which they conceive it designed to exhibit. For the latter, they urge the well-known import of the original word employed to express the baptismal rite, which they allege cannot, without the most unnatural violence, be understood to command any thing less than an *immersion* of the whole body. The class of christians whose sentiments I am relating, are usually known by the appellation of *baptists;* in contradistinction from whom, all other christians may properly be denominated *pædobap-*

tists. It is not my intention to enter into the defence of their peculiar tenets, though they have my unqualified approbation; but merely to state them for the information of my readers. It must be obvious that in the judgement of the baptists, such as have only received the baptismal rite in their infancy must be deemed in reality *unbaptized:* for this is only a different mode of expressing their conviction of the invalidity of infant sprinkling. On this ground they have for the most part confined their communion to persons of their own persuasion, in which, illiberal as it may appear, they are supported by the general practice of the christian world, which, whatever diversities of opinion may have prevailed, has generally concurred in insisting upon baptism as an indispensable prerequisite to the Lord's table. The effect which has resulted in this particular case has indeed been singular, but it has arisen from a rigid adherence to a principle, almost universally adopted, that baptism is, under all circumstances, a necessary prerequisite to the Lord's supper. The practice we are now specifying has usually been termed *strict communion*, while the opposite practice of admitting sincere christians to the eucharist, though in our judgement not baptized, is styled *free communion.* Strict communion is the general practice of our churches, though the abettors of the opposite opinion are rapidly increasing both in numbers and in respectability. The humble hope of casting some additional light on a subject which appears to me of no trivial importance, is my only motive for composing this treatise, in which it will be necessary to attempt the establishment of principles sufficiently comprehensive to decide other questions in ecclesiastical polity, besides those which concern the present controversy. I am greatly mistaken if it be possible to bring it to a satisfactory issue, without adverting to topics in which the christian world are not less interested than the baptists. If the conclusions we shall endeavour to establish, appear on impartial inquiry to be well founded, it will follow that serious errors respecting terms of communion have prevailed to a wide extent in the christian church. It will

be my anxious endeavour, in the progress of this discussion, to avoid whatever is calculated to irritate; and instead of acting the part of a pleader, to advance no argument which has not been well weighed, and of whose validity I am not perfectly convinced. The inquiry will be pursued under two parts; in the first, I shall consider the arguments in favour of *strict communion;* in the second, state, with all possible brevity, the evidence by which we attempt to sustain the opposite practice.

PART I.

ARGUMENTS FOR STRICT COMMUNION CONSIDERED.

In reviewing the arguments which are usually urged for the practice of *strict communion*, or the exclusion of unbaptized persons from the Lord's table, I shall chiefly confine myself to the examination of such as are adduced by the venerable Mr. Booth, in his treatise styled "An Apology for the Baptists," because he is not only held in the highest esteem by the whole denomination, but is allowed by his partisans to have exhibited the full force of their cause. He writes on the subject under discussion with all his constitutional ardour and confidence; which, supported by the spotless integrity and elevated sanctity of the man, have contributed, more perhaps than any other cause, to fortify the baptists in their prevailing practice. I trust the free strictures which it will be necessary to make on his performance, will not be deemed inconsistent with a sincere veneration for his character, which I should be sorry to see treated with the unsparing ridicule and banter with which he has assailed Mr. Bunyan, a name equally dear to genius and to piety. The reader will not expect me to follow him in his declamatory excursions, or in those miscellaneous quotations, often irrelevant, which the extent of his reading has supplied: it will suffice if I carefully examine his arguments, without omitting a single consideration on which he could be supposed to lay a stress.

Section I.

The Argument from the Order of Time in which Baptism and the Lord's Supper are supposed to have been instituted.

One of the principal pleas in favour of *strict communion* is derived from the supposed *priority* of the institution of baptism to the Lord's supper. "That baptism was an ordinance of God," say our opponents, "that submission to it was required, that it was administered to multitudes before the sacred supper was heard of, are undeniable facts. There never was a time since the ministry of our Lord's successors, in which it was not the duty of repenting and believing sinners to be baptized. The venerable John, the twelve apostles, and the *Son of God* incarnate, all united in commanding baptism, at a time when it would have been impious to have eaten bread, and drank wine, as an ordinance of divine worship. Baptism, therefore, had the *priority* in point of institution, which is a presumptive evidence that it has, and ever will have, a prior claim to our obedience. So under the ancient economy, *sacrifices* and *circumcision* were appointed and practised in the patriarchal ages: in the time of Moses, the *paschal feast*, and *burning incense* in the holy place, were appointed by the God of Israel. But the two former being prior in point of institution, always had the priority in point of administration."*

As this is a leading argument, and will go far towards determining the point at issue, the reader will excuse the examination of it being extended to some length. It proceeds, obviously, entirely on a matter of fact, which it assumes as undeniable, the *priority* in *point of time* of the institution of christian baptism, to that of the Lord's supper; and this again rests on another assumption, which is, the identity of John's baptism with that of our Lord. If it should clearly appear that these were two distinct institutes, the argument will be reversed, and it will be evident that the eucharist was appointed and celebrated before christian baptism existed. Let me request the reader not to be startled at the paradoxical air of this assertion, but to lend an impartial attention to the following reasons:

1. The commission to baptize all nations, which was executed by the apostles after our Saviour's resurrection, originated in his *express command;* John's baptism, it is evident, had no such origin. John had baptized for

* Booth's Apology, page 41.

some time before he knew him; it is certain, then, that he did not receive his commission from him. "And I knew him not," saith he, "but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." If the manifesting Christ to Israel was the end and design of John's mission, he must have been in a previous state of obscurity; not in a situation to act the part of a legislator by enacting laws or establishing rites. John uniformly ascribes his commission, not to Christ, but the Father, so that to assert his baptism to be a *christian* institute, is not to interpret, but to contradict him. "And I knew him not," is his language, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God." It was not till he had accredited his mission, by many miracles, and other demonstrations of a preternatural power and wisdom, that our Lord proceeded to modify religion by new institutions, of which the eucharist is the first example. But a christian ordinance not founded on the authority of Christ, not the effect, but the means of his manifestation, and which was first executed by one who knew him not, is to me an incomprehensible mystery.

2. The baptism of John was the baptism of *repentance*, or reformation, as a preparation for the approaching kingdom of God: the institute of Christ included an explicit profession of faith in a particular person, as the Lord of that kingdom. The ministry of John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." All he demanded of such as repaired to him, was to declare their conviction that the Messiah was shortly to appear, to repent of their sins, and resolve to frame their lives in a manner agreeable to such an expectation, without requiring a belief in any existing individual as the Messiah. They were merely to express their readiness to *believe on him who was to come*,* on the reasonable

* Acts xix. 4.

supposition that his actual appearance would not fail to be accompanied with attestations sufficient to establish his pretensions. The profession required in a candidate for *christian* baptism, involved an *historical* faith, a belief in a certain individual, an illustrious personage, who had wrought miracles, declared himself the Son of God, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again the third day. As the conviction demanded in the two cases was *totally distinct*, it was possible for him who sincerely avowed the one, to be destitute of the other; and though the rejection of Christ by John's converts would have been criminal and destructive of salvation, it would not have been self-contradictory, or absurd, since he might sincerely believe on his testimony, that the Christ was shortly to appear, and make some preparations for his approach, who was not satisfied with his character when he was actually manifested.

That such was the real situation of the great body of the Jewish people, at our Lord's advent, is evident from the evangelical records. In short, the profession demanded in the baptism of John was nothing more than a solemn recognition of that great article of the Jewish faith, the appearance of the Messiah, accompanied, indeed, with this additional circumstance, that it was nigh at hand. The faith required by the apostles included a persuasion of all the miraculous facts which they attested, comprehending the preternatural conception, the deity, incarnation, and atonement, the miracles, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In the one, was contained a general expectation of the speedy appearance of an illustrious person under the character of the Messiah; in the other, an explicit declaration that Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and death are recorded in the evangelists, was the identical person. But in order to constitute an identity in religious rites, two things are requisite, a *sameness* in the corporeal action, and a sameness in the import. The *action* may be the same, yet the rites totally different, or christian baptism must be confounded with legal Jewish purifications, the greater part of which consisted in a total immersion of the body in water. The diversity of

signification, the distinct uses to which they were applied, constitute their only difference, but quite sufficient to render it absurd to consider them as one and the same. And surely he is guilty of a similar mistake, who, misled by the exact resemblance of the actions physically considered, confounds the rite intended to announce the future, though speedy appearance of the Messiah, without defining his person and the ceremony expressive of a firm belief in an identical person, as already manifested under that illustrious character.

3. Christian baptism was invariably administered in the *name of Jesus;* while there is sufficient evidence that John's was not performed in that name. That it was not during the first stage of his ministry is certain, because we learn from his own declaration, that when he first executed his commission he did not know him, but was previously apprised of a miraculous sign, which should serve to identify him when he appeared. In order to obviate the suspicion of collusion or conspiracy, circumstances were so arranged that John remained ignorant of the person of the Saviour, and possessed, at the commencement of his career, that knowledge only of the Messiah which was common to enlightened Jews. If we suppose him at a subsequent period to have incorporated the name of Jesus with his institute, an alteration so striking would unquestionably have been noticed by the evangelists, as it must have occasioned among the people much speculation and surprise, of which, however, no traces are perceptible. Besides, it is impossible to peruse the gospels with attention, without remarking the extreme reserve maintained by our Lord, with respect to his claim to the character of Messiah; that he studiously avoided, until his arraignment before the high priest, the public declaration of that fact; that he wrought his principal miracles in the obscure province of Galilee, often accompanied with strict injunctions of secresy; and that the whole course of his ministry, till its concluding scene, was so conducted as at once to afford sincere inquirers sufficient evidence of his mission, and to elude the malice of his enemies. In descending from the mount of transfiguration, where he had been proclaimed the Son of God from *the most excellent glory*, he strictly charged the disciples who accompanied him to tell no man of it, till he was raised from the dead. The appellation he constantly assumed was that of the Son of Man, which, whatever be its precise import, could by no construction become the ground of a criminal charge. When at the feast of dedication, "the Jews came around him in the temple, saying, How long dost thou keep us in suspense? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly:" he replied, "I have told you, and ye believe not: the works which I do in my Father's name they bear witness of me."* From this passage it is evident that our Lord had not, hitherto, publicly and explicitly affirmed himself to be the Messiah, or there would have been no foundation for the complaint of these Jews; nor does he on this occasion expressly affirm it, but refers them to the testimony of his works, without specifying the precise import of that attestation. In the progress of his discourse, however, he advances nearer to an open declaration of his Messiahship than on any former occasion, affirming his Father and himself to be one, in consequence of which the people attempt to stone him, as guilty of blasphemy, in making himself the Son of God. As his time was not yet come, he still maintains a degree of his wonted caution, and vindicates his assumption of that honour, upon principles far inferior to what he might justly have urged. Yet such was the effect of this discourse, that in order to screen himself from the fury of his enemies, he found it necessary immediately to retire beyond Jordan. In an advanced stage of his ministry, we find him inquiring of his disciples the prevailing opinions entertained respecting himself; on which they reply, "Some say thou art John the Baptist, others Elias, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." That he was the Messiah, was not, it is evident, the opinion generally entertained at that time, by such as were most favourably disposed towards his character and pretensions, which it could not fail to have been, had this title been publicly proclaimed: but this

* John x. 24, 25.

was so far from his intention, that when Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, uttered that glorious confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord immediately enjoins secrecy. What he enjoined his disciples not to publish, he certainly did not publish himself, nor for the same reason suffer it to be indiscriminately proclaimed by his forerunner. But if we suppose John to baptize in his name, we must suppose what is equivalent to an explicit declaration of his being the Messiah; for since he on all occasions predicted the speedy appearance of that great personage, the people could not fail to identify with him, the individual whose name was thus employed, and all the precautions maintained by our Saviour would have been utterly defeated. For what possible purpose could he forbid his disciples to publish, what John is supposed to have promulgated as often as he administered the baptismal rite? and how shall we account, on this hypothesis, for the diversity of opinion which prevailed respecting his character, among those who were thoroughly convinced of the divine mission of that great Prophet? From these considerations, in addition to the total silence of scripture, the judicious reader, I presume, will conclude without hesitation that John did *not* baptize in the name of Jesus, which is an essential ingredient in christian baptism; and though it is administered, in fact, in the name of each person of the blessed Godhead, not in that of the Son only, this, instead of impairing, strengthens the argument, by enlarging still farther the difference betwixt the two ordinances in question; for none will contend that John immersed his disciples in the name of the Holy Trinity.

4. The baptism instituted by our Lord, is in scripture distinguished from that of the forerunner, by the *superior effects* with which it was accompanied; so that, instead of being confounded, they are contrasted, in the sacred historians. "I indeed," said John, "baptize you with water unto repentance, but there cometh one after me who is mightier than I; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost, and in fire." The rite administered by John was a mere immersion in water, unaccompanied with that

effusion of the Spirit, that redundant supply of supernatural gifts and graces which distinguished the subjects of the christian institute. On the passage just quoted, St. Chrysostom has the following comment:—"Having agitated their minds with the fear of future judgement, and the expectation of punishment, and the mention of the axe, and the rejection of their ancestors, and the substitution of a new race, together with the double menace of excision and burning, and by all these means softened their obduracy, and disposed them to a desire of deliverance from these evils, he then introduces the mention of Christ, not in a simple manner, but with much elevation; in exhibiting his own disparity, lest he should appear to be using the language of compliment, he commences by stating a comparison betwixt the benefit bestowed by each. For he did not immediately say, I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoes; but having first stated the *insignificance* of his own baptism, and shown that it had no effect beyond bringing them to repentance, (for he did not style it the water of remission, but of repentance,) he proceeds to the baptism ordained by Christ, which was replete with an *ineffable gift*."* This eminent father, we perceive, insists on the prodigious inferiority of the ceremony performed by John to the christian sacrament, from its being merely a symbol of repentance, without comprehending the remission of sins,† or the donation of the Spirit. The evangelists, Mark and Luke, it is true, affirm that John preached the baptism of repentance *for* the remission of sins, whence we are entitled to infer that the rite which he administered, when accompanied with suitable dispositions, was important in the order of preparation, not that it was accompanied with the immediate or actual collation of that benefit.

Such as repented at his call, stood fair candidates for the blessings of the approaching dispensation, among which, an assurance of pardon, the adoption of children, and the gift of the Spirit, held the most conspicuous

* Homily xi. on Matthew. † Mark i. 4. Luke iii. 3.

place; blessings of which it was the office of John to excite the expectation, but of Christ to bestow. The effusion of the Spirit, indeed, in the multifarious forms of his miraculous and sanctifying operation, may be considered as equivalent to them all; and this, we are distinctly told, was not given (save in a very scanty manner) during our Lord's abode upon earth, because he was not yet glorified. Reserved to adorn the triumph of the ascended Saviour, the apostles were commanded to wait at Jerusalem until it was bestowed, which was on the day of Pentecost, when "a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind, filled the place where they were assembled, and cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost." This was the first example of that baptism of the Spirit, as the author of which, John asserts the immense superiority of the Messiah, not to himself only, but to all preceding prophets. In the subsequent history, we perceive that this gift was, on all ordinary occasions, conferred in connexion with baptism. In this connexion, it is exhibited by St. Peter, in his address on the day of Pentecost; "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Thus it was also in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Agreeable to our Lord's prediction of the signs which should accompany them that believe, there is reason to suppose a greater or less measure of these supernatural endowments regularly accompanied the imposition of the hands of the apostles on primitive converts, immediately subsequent to their baptism; which affords an easy solution to the surprise Paul appears to have felt, in finding certain disciples at Ephesus, who, though they had been baptized, were yet unacquainted with these communications. "Into what then," he asks, "were ye baptized?" and upon being informed "into John's baptism," the difficulty vanished.

Since the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or the copious effusion of spiritual influences, in which primitive christians were, so to speak, immersed, was appointed to follow the sacramental use of water, under the christian economy, while the same corporeal action performed by John was a naked ceremony, not accompanied by any such effects, this difference betwixt them is sufficient to account for their being *contrasted* in scripture, and ought ever to have prevented their being confounded as one and the same institute.

5. The case of the disciples at Ephesus, to which we have just adverted, affords a demonstrative proof of the position for which we are contending; for if John's baptism was the same with our Lord's, upon what principles could St. Paul proceed in administering the latter to such as had already received the former? As I am aware that some have attempted to deny so plain a fact, I shall beg leave to quote the whole passage, which, I am persuaded, will leave no doubt on the mind of an impartial reader:—"It came to pass while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, passing through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? but they replied, We have not even heard that there is an Holy Ghost. He said unto them, Into what then were ye baptized? they said, Into John's baptism. Paul replied, John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him who was to come, that is, on Jesus Christ. And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." I am conscious that there are not wanting some who contend that the fifth verse* is to be interpreted as the language of St. Paul, affirming that at the command of John, the people were baptized in the name of Jesus. But not to repeat what has already been advanced to show that this is contrary to fact, (for who, I might ask, were the people, who at his instigation were baptized in that name, or what traces are there in the evangelical history of such

* "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts xix. 5.

a practice, during the period of his ministry?) not to insist further on this, it is obvious that this interpretation of the passage contradicts itself: for if John told the people that they were to believe on him who *was* to come, this was equivalent to declaring that he had not yet manifested himself; while the baptizing in his name as an existing individual, would have been to affirm the contrary. Besides, we must remark, that the persons on whom Paul is asserted to have laid his hands, were unquestionably the identical persons who are affirmed in the preceding verse to have been baptized; for there is no other antecedent; so that if the meaning of the passage be what some contend for, the sacred historian must be supposed to assert that he laid his hands, not on the twelve disciples at Ephesus, but on John's converts in general, that the Holy Ghost came upon them, and that they spake with tongues and prophesied; which is ineffably absurd.

Either this must be supposed, or the words, which in their original structure are most closely combined, must be conceived to consist of two parts, the first relating to John's converts in general, the second to the twelve disciples at Ephesus; and the relative pronoun, expressive of the latter description of persons, instead of being conjoined to the preceding clause, must be referred to an antecedent, removed at the distance of three verses. In the whole compass of theological controversy, it would be difficult to assign a stronger instance of the force of prejudice in obscuring a plain matter of fact; nor is it easy to conjecture what could be the temptation to do such violence to the language of scripture, and to every principle of sober criticism, unless it were the horror which certain divines have conceived, against every thing which bore the shadow of countenancing anabaptistical error. The ancient commentators appear to have felt no such apprehensions, but to have followed, without scruple, the natural import of the passage.*

* The intelligent reader will not be displeased to see the opinion of St. Austin on this point. It is almost unnecessary to say that it is decisively in our favour; nor does it appear that any of the fathers entertained a doubt on the subject. In confuting the opinion of those who contended that such as were reclaimed from heresy ought to be rebaptized, he represents them as arguing, that if the converts of John required to be rebaptized, much more those who were converted from heresy. Since they who had the baptism of John were commanded by Paul to be baptized, not having the baptism of Christ, why do you extol the merit of John, and reprobate the misery of heretics? "I concede to you," says St. Austin, "the misery of heretics: but heretics give the baptism of Christ, which John did not give."

The comment of Chrysostom, on the passage under consideration, is equally decisive. "He (Paul) did not say to them that the baptism of John was nothing, but that it was incomplete; nor does he say this simply, or without having a further purpose in view, but that he might teach and persuade them to be baptized in the name of Jesus, which they were, and received the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of Paul's hands." In the course of his exposition, he solves the difficulty attending the supposition of disciples at Ephesus, a place so remote from Judæa, having received baptism from John. "Perhaps," says he "they were then on a journey, and went out, and were baptized." But even when they were baptized, they knew not Jesus. Nor does he ask them, Do ye believe on Jesus? but, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" He knew that they had not received it, but is desirous of speaking to them, that on learning that they were destitute of it, they might be induced to seek it. A little afterwards he adds, "Well did he (Paul) denominate the baptism of John, the baptism of repentance, and not of remission; instructing and persuading them that it was destitute of that advantage: but the effect of that which was given afterwards was remission." *Homily in loco*, vol. iv. Etonæ. I am aware that very learned men have doubted the authenticity of Chrysostom's Commentary on the Acts, on account of the supposed inferiority of it to his other expository works. But without having recourse to so violent a supposition, its inferiority, should it be admitted, may be easily accounted for by the negligence, ignorance, or inattention of his amanuensis; supposing (which is not improbable) that his discourses were taken from his lips. From the time he was sixty years of age, he permitted his discourses to be taken down in short-hand, just as he delivered them.—*Euseb.* lib. vi. c. 26.

6. Independently of this decisive fact, whoever considers the extreme popularity of John, and the multitude, of all descriptions, who flocked to his baptism, will find it difficult to believe, that there were not many in the same situation with these twelve disciples. The annunciation of the speedy appearance of their Messiah was the most welcome of all intelligence to the Jewish people, and did not fail, for a time, to produce prodigious effects.

The reader is requested to notice the terms employed to describe the effects of John's ministry, and compare

them with the language of the historian, in depicting the most prosperous state of the church. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the coast round about Jordan, and were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins." Where is such language employed to represent the success of the apostles? *Their* converts are *numerically* stated, and, at some distance from our Lord's ascension, appear to have amounted to about five thousand, while a great majority of the nation continued impenitent and incredulous. We read of no party formed against the son of Zechariah, no persecution raised against his followers; and such was the reverence in which he continued to be held after his death, that the scribes and pharisees, those determined enemies to the gospel, dared not avow their disbelief of his mission, because all the people considered him as a prophet. The historian Josephus, who is generally supposed by the learned to have made no mention of our Saviour, bears decisive testimony to John's merits, and imputes the misfortunes of Herod to the guilt he contracted by putting him to to death.*

From these considerations, I infer, that if we suppose the converts made by the apostles to have been universally baptized, on their admission into the church, (a fact not doubted by our opponents,) multitudes of them must have been in the same situation with the disciples at Ephesus. How is it possible it should have been otherwise? When the number of his converts was so prodigious, when the submission to his institute appears to have been almost national, when of so small a number as twelve, two at least of the apostles were of his disciples, who can doubt, for a moment, that some, at least, of the multitudes who were converted on or after the day of Pentecost, consisted of such as had previously submitted to the baptism of John? Is it possible that the ministry of the forerunner, and of the apostles of our Lord, should both have been productive of such great effects among the same people, at the distance of a few years, without operating, in a single instance, in the same direction, and

* Antiq. Jud. lib. viii. Colon. 1691.

upon the same persons? Amongst the converts at the day of Pentecost, and at subsequent periods, there must have been no inconsiderable number who had for a time been sufficiently awakened by the ministry of John to comply with this ordinance; yet it is evident, from the narrative in the Acts, as well as admitted by our opponents, that Peter enjoined on them all, without exception, the duty of being immersed in the name of Christ. That such a description of persons should need to be converted by the apostles, will easily be conceived, if we allow ourselves to reflect on the circumstances of the times. "He was a burning and a shining light," said our Lord, speaking of his forerunner, "and ye were willing for a time to rejoice in his light." This implies that their attachment was transient, their repentance superficial, and that the greater part of such as appeared, for a while, most determined to press into the kingdom of God, afterwards sunk into a state of apathy. The singular spectacle of a prophet arising, after a long cessation of prophetical gifts, his severe sanctity, his bold and alarming address, coinciding with the general expectation of the Messiah, made a powerful impression on the spirits of men, and disposed them to pay a profound attention to his ministry; and from their attachment to every thing ritual and ceremonial, they would feel no hesitation in submitting to the ceremony enjoined. But when the kingdom, which they eagerly anticipated, appeared to be altogether of a spiritual nature, divested of secular pomp and grandeur; when the sublimer mysteries of the gospel began to be unfolded, and the necessity inculcated of eating the flesh, and drinking the blood, of the Son of Man, the people were offended; and even of the professed disciples of our Lord, "many walked no more with him." A general declension succeeded, so that of the multitudes who once appeared to be much moved by his ministry, and that of his forerunner, the number which persevered was so inconsiderable, that all that could be mustered to witness his resurrection amounted to little more than five hundred,* a number which may be considered as consti-

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

tuting the whole body of the church, till the day of Pentecost.

The parable of the house forsaken for a time by an evil spirit, swept and garnished, to which he returned with seven more wicked than himself, it is generally admitted was designed to represent this temporary reformation of the Jewish nation, together with its subsequent apostasy. The day of Pentecost changed the scene, the power of the ascended Saviour began to be developed; and three thousand were converted at one time. Nor did it cease here; for soon after, we are informed of a great multitude of priests who became obedient to the faith; and at a subsequent period, St. James reminds the apostle of the gentiles of many myriads of converted Jews, all zealous for the law.

Let me ask again, is it possible to suppose that none of these myriads consisted of such as had been baptized by John? Were they all, without exception, of that impious class which uniformly held his mission in contempt? It is impossible to suppose it; it is contradicted by the express testimony of scripture, which affirms two of the apostles to have been his disciples and companions.* But if such as professed their faith in Christ, under the ministry of the apostles, were baptized on that profession, without any consideration of their having been previously immersed by John, or not, what stronger proof can be desired, that the institutes in question were totally distinct? Were we satisfied with an *argumentum ad hominem*, with the sort of proof sufficient to silence our opponents, here the matter might safely rest. But, independent of their concession, I must add that it is manifest from the whole tenour of the Acts, that the baptismal rite was universally administered to the converts to christianity subsequent to the day of Pentecost. "Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, *every one* of you:" it is added, almost immediately, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."

It will possibly be asked, if the rite which the forerunner of our Lord administered is not to be considered

* John i. 35—37.

as a christian institute, to what dispensation are we to assign it, since it is, manifestly, no part of the economy of Moses. We reply, that it was the symbol of a peculiar dispensation, which was neither entirely legal nor evangelical, but occupied an intermediate station, possessing something of the character and attributes of both; a kind of twilight, equally removed from the obscurity of the first, and the splendour of the last and perfect economy of religion. *The law and prophets were until John;* his mission constituted a distinct æra, and placed the nation, to which he was sent, in circumstances materially different from its preceding or subsequent state. It was the æra of preparation; it was a voice which, breaking through a long silence, announced the immediate approach of the *desire of all nations, the messenger of the covenant, in whom they delighted.* In announcing this event as at hand, and establishing a rite unknown to the law, expressive of that purity of heart, and reformation of life, which were the only suitable preparations for his reception, he stood alone, equally severed from the choir of the prophets, and the company of the apostles; and the light which he emitted, though it greatly surpassed every preceding illumination, was of short duration, being soon eclipsed and extinguished by that ineffable effulgence, before which nothing can retain its splendour.

The wisdom of God in the arrangement of successive dispensations, seems averse to sudden and violent innovations, rarely introducing new rites, without incorporating something of the old. As by the introduction of the Mosaic, the simple ritual of the patriarchal dispensation was not so properly abolished, as amplified and extended into a regular system of prefigurations of *good things to come*, in which the worship by sacrifices, and the distinction of animals into clean and unclean, reappeared under a new form; so the æra of immediate preparation was distinguished by a ceremony not entirely new, but derived from the purifications of the law, applied to a special purpose.* Our Lord incorporated the same rite

* The principal part of these consisted in bathing the body in water.

into his religion, newly modified, and adapted to the peculiar views and objects of the christian economy, in conjunction with another positive institution, the rudiments of which are perceptible in the passover. It seemed suitable to his wisdom, by such gentle gradations to conduct his church from an infantine state, to a state of maturity and perfection.

Before I dismiss this part of the subject, which has perhaps already detained the reader too long, I must beg leave to hazard one conjecture. Since it is manifest that the baptism of John did not supersede the christian ordinance, they being perfectly distinct, it is natural to inquire, who baptized the apostles and the hundred and twenty disciples assembled with them at the day of Pentecost? My deliberate opinion is, that, in the christian sense of the term, they were not baptized at all. From the total silence of scripture, and from other circumstances which might be adduced, it is difficult to suppose they submitted to that rite after our Saviour's resurrection; and previous to it, it has been sufficiently proved that it was not in force. It is almost certain that some, probably most of them, had been baptized by John, but, for reasons which have been already amply assigned, this will not account for their not submitting to the christian ordinance. The true account seems to be, that the precept of baptism had no *retrospective* bearing; and that, consequently, its obligation extended only to such as were converted to christianity subsequently to the time of its promulgation. Such as had professed their faith in Christ from the period of his first manifestation, could not, without palpable incongruity, recommence that profession, which would have been to cancel and annul their former religious pretensions. With what propriety could the apostles of the Lord, *who had continued with him in his temptations*, place themselves on a level with that multitude, which, however penitent at present, had recently demanded his blood with clamorous importunity? not to insist that they had already received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which the sacramental use of water was but a figure. They were not converted

to the christian religion subsequently to their Lord's resurrection, nor did the avowal of their attachment to the Messiah commence from that period; and therefore they were not comprehended under the baptismal law, which was propounded for the regulation of the conduct of persons in essentially different circumstances. When St. Paul says, "*As many* of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ," his language seems to intimate that there were a class of christians to whom this argument did not apply.*

Having proved, I trust to the satisfaction of the candid reader, that baptism, considered as a christian institution, had no existence during the personal ministry of our Saviour, the plea of our opponents, founded on the supposed *priority* of that ordinance to the Lord's supper, is completely overruled; whatever weight it might possess, supposing it were valid, must be wholly transferred to the opposite side, and it must be acknowledged, either that they have reasoned inconclusively, or have produced a demonstration in our favour. It now appears that the original communicants at the Lord's table, at the time they partook of it, were, with respect to christian baptism, precisely in the same situation with the persons they exclude.

Section II.

The Argument for Strict Communion, from the Order of Words in the Apostolic Commission, considered.

The commission which the apostles received after our Lord's resurrection, was in the following words:—"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." From baptism being mentioned *first* after teaching, it is urged that it ought invariably to be

* Rom. vi. 3.

administered immediately after effectual instruction is imparted, and consequently before an approach to the Lord's table. Whence it is concluded, that to communicate with such as are unbaptized, is a violation of divine order.*

It may assist the reader to form a judgement of the force of the argument adduced on this occasion, if we reduce it to the following syllogism:

The persons who are to be taught to observe all things given in charge to the apostle, are the baptized alone.

But the Lord's supper is one of these things.

Therefore the ordinance of the Lord's supper ought to be enjoined on the baptized alone.

Here it is obvious that the conclusion rests entirely upon this principle, that *nothing* which the apostles were commissioned to enjoin on believers, is to be recommended to the attention of persons not baptized; since, as far as this argument is concerned, the observation of the Lord's supper is supposed not to belong to them, merely because it forms a part of those precepts. It is obvious, if the reasoning of our opponents be valid, it militates irresistibly against the inculcation of every branch of christian duty, on persons who in their judgement have not partaken of the baptismal sacrament: it excludes them not merely from the Lord's supper, but from every species of instruction appropriate to christians; nor can they exhort pædobaptists to walk worthy of their high calling, to adorn their christian profession, to cultivate brotherly love, or to the performance of any duty resulting from their actual relation to Christ, without a palpable violation of their own principles. In all such instances they would be teaching them to observe injunctions which Christ gave in charge to the apostles for the regulation of christian conduct, while they deem it necessary to repel them from the sacrament, merely on account of its forming a part of those injunctions. Nor can they avoid the force of this reasoning, by objecting that though it may be their duty to enjoin on unbaptized believers some parts of the mind of Christ respecting the conduct of his mystical members, it will not follow that they are to be admitted to the Lord's table; and that their meaning is, that it is only subsequently to baptism, that *all things* ought to be enforced on the consciences of christians. For if it be once admitted that the clause on which so much stress is laid, is not to be interpreted so as absolutely to exclude unbaptized christians from the *whole* of its import, to what purpose is it alleged against their admission to the eucharist? or how does it appear that this may not be one of the parts in which they are comprehended?

When the advocates for strict communion remind us of the order in which the two positive institutions of christianity are enjoined, they appear to assume it for granted that we are desirous of inverting that order, and that we are contending for the celebration of the eucharist previous to baptism, in the case of a clear comprehension of the nature and obligation of each. We plead for nothing of the kind. Supposing a convert to christianity convinced of the ordinance of baptism, in the light in which we contemplate it, we should urge his obligation to comply with it, previous to his reception of the sacrament, with as little hesitation as the most rigid of our opponents; nor should we be more disposed than

* "Teach," says Mr. Booth, "is the high commission, and such the express command of him who is *Lord of all*, when addressing those who are called to preach his word and administer his institutions. Hence it is manifest the commission and command are first of all to teach: what then?—to baptize, or to administer the Lord's supper? I leave common sense to judge, and being persuaded that she will give her verdict in my favour, I will venture to add, a limited commission implies a prohibition of such things as are not contained in it; and positive laws imply their *negative*.

"For instance, when God commanded Abraham to circumcise all his males, he readily concluded that neither circumcision, nor any rite of a similar nature, was to be administered to his females. And as our brethren themselves maintain, when Christ commanded *believers* should be baptized, without mentioning any others, he tacitly prohibited that ordinance from being administered to *infants*—so, by parity of reason, if the same sovereign Lord commanded that believers should be baptized—baptized *immediately* after they made a profession of faith, then he must intend that the administration of baptism should be prior to a reception of the Lord's supper, and, consequently, tacitly prohibits every unbaptized person having communion at his table."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 34.

themselves to countenance a neglect of known duty, or a wanton inversion of the order of christian appointments. Whether in such circumstances the attention of a candidate for christian communion should first be directed to baptism, is not the question at issue; but what conduct ought to be maintained towards sincere christians, who, after serious examination, profess their conviction of being baptized already, or who, in any manner whatever, are withheld by motives purely conscientious, from complying with what we conceive to be a christian ordinance. To justify the exclusion of such from the Lord's table, it is not sufficient to allege the prescribed order of the institutions; it is necessary also to evince such a *dependence* of one upon the other, that a neglect of the first from involuntary mistake, annuls the obligation of the second. Let this dependence be once clearly pointed out, and we give up the cause. It has been asserted, indeed, with much confidence, that we have the same authority for confining our communion to baptized persons, as the ancient Jews for admitting none but such as had been circumcised, to the passover; a simple recital, however, of the words of the law, with respect to that ancient rite, will be sufficient to demonstrate the contrary: "When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep his passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come and keep it, and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no *uncircumcised* person shall eat thereof." But where, let me ask, is it asserted in the New Testament that no unbaptized person shall partake of the eucharist?* So far from this, it has been, I trust, satisfactorily shown, that, of the original communicants at its first institution, not one was thus qualified.

I presume it will be acknowledged that the Jewish law

* "Was it the duty, think you, of an ancient Israelite to worship at the sanctuary, or to partake of the paschal feast, before he was circumcised? Or was it the duty of the Jewish priests to burn incense in the holy place, before they offered the morning or evening sacrifice? The appointments of God must be administered in his own way, and in that order which he has fixed."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 143.

was so clear and express in insisting on circumcision as a necessary preparation for partaking of the paschal lamb, that none could mistake it, or approach that feast in an uncircumcised state, without being guilty of wilful impiety; and if it is intended to insinuate the same charge against pædobaptists, let it be alleged without disguise, that it may be fairly met and refuted. But if it be acknowledged that nothing but such involuntary mistakes, such unintentional errors as are incident to some of the wisest and best of men, are imputable in the present instance, we are at a loss to conceive upon what principle they are compared to wilful prevarication and rebellion. The degree of blame which attaches to the conduct of those who mistake the will of Christ with respect to the sacramental use of water, we shall not pretend to determine; but we feel no hesitation in affirming, that the practice of comparing it to a presumptuous violation and contempt of divine law, is equally repugnant to the dictates of propriety and of candour. Among the innumerable descendants of Abraham, it is impossible to find one, since their departure from Egypt, who has doubted of the obligation of circumcision, of the proper subjects of that rite, or of its being an indispensable prerequisite to the privileges of the Mosaic covenant. Among christians, on the contrary, of unexceptionable character and exalted piety, it cannot be denied that the subject, the mode, and the perpetuity of baptism, have each supplied occasion for controversy; which can only be ascribed to the minute particularity with which the ceremonies of the law were enjoined, compared to the precise brevity which characterises the history of evangelical institutes. We are far, however, from insinuating a doubt on the obligation of believers to submit to the ordinance of baptism, or of its being exclusively appropriated to such; but we affirm that in no part of scripture is it inculcated as a *preparative to the Lord's supper*, and that this view of it is a mere fiction of the imagination.

When duties are enjoined in a certain series, each of them, on the authority in which they originate, become obligatory; nor are we excused from performing those

which stand later in the series, on account of our having, from misconception of their meaning, or from any other cause, omitted the first. To exemplify this by a familiar instance: It will be admitted that the law of nature enforces the following duties, resulting from the relation of children to their parents: first, to yield implicit obedience in the state of nonage; next, in maturer age to pay respectful deference to their advice, and a prompt attention to their wants; lastly, after they are deceased, affectionately to cherish their memory, and defend their good name. None will deny that each of these branches of conduct is obligatory, and that this is the order in which they are recommended to our attention. But will it be contended that he who has neglected the first, ought not to perform the second; or that he who has failed in the second, ought to omit the third? To such an absurd pretence we should immediately reply that they are all *independently* obligatory, as respective dictates of the divine will; and that for him who has violated one or them, to urge his past delinquencies as an apology for the present, would only prove an aggravation of his guilt. It is true that some duties are so situated, as parts or appendages of preceding ones, that their obligation may be said to result from them; as, for example, the duty of confessing Christ before men arises from the previous duty of believing on him; and that of joining a christian society, presupposes the obligation of becoming a christian. In such cases, however, as the connexion betwixt the respective branches of practice is founded on the nature of things, it is easily perceived, and rarely, if ever, the subject of controversy. In a series of positive precepts, this principle has no place; as they originate merely in arbitrary appointment, their mutual relation can only be the result of clear and express command; and as reason could never have discovered their obligation, so it is as little able to ascertain their intrinsic connexion and dependence, which, wherever it subsists, must be the effects of the same positive prescription which gave them birth. It cannot be pretended that an unbaptized believer is intrinsically

disqualified for a suitable attendance at the Lord's table, or that it is so essentially connected with baptism, as to render the act of communion, in itself, absurd or improper. The communion has no retrospective reference to baptism, nor is baptism an anticipation of communion. Enjoined at different times, and appointed for different purposes, they are capable, without the least inconvenience, of being contemplated apart; and on no occasion are they mentioned in such a connexion as to imply, much less to assert, that the one is enjoined *with a view* to the other. Such a connexion, we acknowledge, subsisted betwixt the rites of circumcision and the passover; and all we demand of the advocates of strict communion is, that instead of amusing us with fanciful analogies drawn from an antiquated law, they would point us to some clause in the New Testament which asserts a similar relation betwixt baptism and the Lord's supper. But here, where the very hinge of the controversy turns, the Scriptures are silent. They direct us to be baptized, and they direct us to commemorate the Saviour's death; but not a syllable do they utter to inform us of the inseparable connexion betwixt these two ordinances. This deficiency is ill supplied by fervid declamation on the perspicuity of our Lord's commission, and the inexcusable inattention or prejudice which has led to a misconception of its meaning; for let the persons whom these charges may concern be as guilty as they may, since they are still acknowledged to be christians, the questions return, why are they debarred from the communion of saints, and, while entitled to all other spiritual privileges, supposed to be incapacitated from partaking of the symbols of a crucified Saviour? How came the deteriorating effects of their error respecting baptism to affect them but in one point, that of their eligibility as candidates for communion, without spreading farther? That it just amounts to a forfeiture of this privilege, and of no other, is a conclusion to which, as it is certain it cannot be established by reason, we ask to be conducted by revelation; and we entreat our opponents for information on that head again and again, but entreat in vain.

Were we to judge from the ardent attachment which the abettors of strict communion, on all occasions, profess to the positive institutes of the gospel, we should suppose that the object of their efforts was to raise them to their just estimation, and to rescue them from desuetude and neglect. We should conjecture that they arose from a solicitude to revive certain practices which had prevailed in the purest ages of the church, but were afterwards laid aside, just as the ordinance of preaching was, during the triumph of the papacy, almost consigned to oblivion; and that the consequence of complying with their suggestions, would be a more complete exhibition of christianity in all its parts. But their zeal operates in quite a contrary direction. The success of their scheme tends not to extend the practice of baptism, no, not in a single instance, but merely to exclude the Lord's supper. Leaving the former appointment unaltered and untouched, it merely proposes to abolish the latter; and, as far as it is practicable, to lay the christian world under an interdict. The real state of the case is as follows: On the subject of baptism, and particularly whether it is applicable to infants, opinions are divided, and the majority have come, as we conceive, to an erroneous conclusion. How do they propose to remedy this evil? By throwing all manner of obstacles in the way of an approach to the Lord's table, and, as far as their power extends, rendering it impracticable, by clogging it with a condition at which conscience revolts. They propose to punish men for the involuntary neglect of one ordinance, by compelling them to abandon the other; and because they are uneasy at perceiving them perform but one half of their duty, oblige them, as far as lies in their power, to omit the whole. I must confess I feel no partiality for those violent remedies, which, under the pretence of reforming, destroy; or for that passion for order which would rather witness the entire desolation of the sanctuary, than a defalcation of its rites; and in spite of all the efforts of sophistry, I must be permitted to believe that our Lord's express injunction on his followers, "do this in remembrance of me," is a better reason for the

celebration of the communion than can be adduced for its neglect.

Section III.

The Argument from Apostolical Precedent, and from the different Significations of the two Institutions, considered.

In vindication of their practice, our opponents are wont to urge the order of administration in the primitive and apostolic practice. They remind us that the members of the primitive church were universally baptized; that, if we acknowledge its constitution in that respect to be expressive of the mind of Christ, we are bound to follow that precedent, and that to deviate from it, in this particular, is virtually to impeach either the wisdom of our Lord, or the fidelity of his apostles.*

With respect to the *universality* of the practice of christian baptism, having already stated our views, it is not necessary to repeat what has already been advanced, or to recapitulate the reasons on which we found our opinion, that it was not extended to such as were converted previous to our Lord's resurrection. Subsequently to that period, we admit, without hesitation, that the converts to the christian faith submitted to that ordinance, prior to their reception into the christian church. As little are we disposed to deny that it is at present the duty of the sincere believer to follow their example, and

* "The order of administration," says Mr. Booth, "in the primitive and apostolic practice, now demands our notice. That the apostles, when endued with power from on high, understood our Lord in the sense for which we plead, and practised accordingly, is quite evident. Then they that gladly received his word were, what? admitted to the Lord's table? No, but baptized:—*And the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls: and they continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.* If our brethren do not look upon the apostolic precedent as expressive of the mind of Christ, and as a pattern for future imitation, to the end of the world, they must consider the apostles as either ignorant of our Lord's will, or as unfaithful in the performance of it."—*Booth's Apology*, pp. 47, 48.

that, supposing him to be clearly convinced of the nature and import of baptism, he would be guilty of a criminal irregularity who neglected to attend to it, previous to his entering into christian fellowship. On the obligation of both the positive rites enjoined in the New Testament, and the prior claim of baptism to the attention of such as are properly enlightened on the subject, we have no dispute. All we contend for is, that they do not so depend one upon the other that the conscientious omission of the first forfeits the privilege, or cancels the duty, of observing the second; nor are we able to perceive that what, in the present instance, is styled apostolic precedent, at all decides the question. To attempt to determine under what circumstances the highest precedent possesses the form of law, involves a difficult and delicate inquiry; for, while it is acknowledged that much deference is due to primitive example, there were certain usages in apostolical times, which few would attempt to revive. There is one general rule, however, applicable to the subject, which is, that no matter of fact is entitled to be considered as an authoritative precedent, which *necessarily* arose out of existing circumstances, so that in the then present state of things, it could not fail to have occurred. The foundation of this rule is obvious. Nothing is of the nature of law but what emanates from the will of the legislator; but when a particular fact, recorded in an historical narration, is so situated, that the contrary would have appeared incongruous or absurd; in other words, when it could not fail to be the result of previous occurrences, such a fact is destitute of the essential characteristic of a law; it has no apparent dependence upon a superior will.

Hence many practices occur in the history of the apostolic transactions, which it is universally admitted we are not obliged to imitate. It is an unquestionable fact, that the eucharist was first celebrated with unleavened bread, on the evening, in an upper room, and to Jews only; but as we distinctly perceive that these particulars originated in the peculiar circumstances of the time, we are far from considering them as binding. On the same principle, we

account for the members of the primitive church consisting only of such as were baptized, without erecting that circumstance into an invariable rule of action. When we recollect that no error or mistake subsisted, or could subsist, among christians at that period, we are compelled to regard it as the necessary consequence of the state of opinions then prevalent. While all the faithful concurred in their interpretation of the law which enjoins it, how is it possible to suppose it neglected? or whence could rebaptized communicants have been drawn? Is this circumstance, to which so much importance is attached, of such a nature that no account can be given of it, but upon the principle of our opponents? or is it the necessary consequence of the then actual situation of the church? If the latter be admitted, it ceases, for the reason already alleged, to be a precedent, or a rule for the direction of future times.

We are willing to go a step further, and to acknowledge that he who, convinced of the divine origin of christianity by the ministry of the apostles, had refused to be baptized, would, at that period, have been justly debarred from receiving the sacramental elements. While the apostles were yet living, and daily exemplifying the import of their commission before the eyes of the people, it would have been impossible to pretend ignorance; nor could that sincerity fail to be suspected, which was not accompanied with an implicit submission to their authority.

"He that receiveth you," saith our Lord, "receiveth me; he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me." Agreeably to which we find that the disciple whom Jesus loved did not scruple to use the following language:—"By this ye know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error; he that is of God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." Such a conduct was perfectly proper. As there can be but two guides in religion, reason and authority, and every man must form his belief, either by following the light of his own mind, or the information and instruction he derives from others: so, it is equally evident, it is only by the last of these methods that the

benefit of a new revelation can be diffused. Either we must suppose an infinite multitude of miracles performed on the minds of individuals to convey the knowledge of supernatural truths, or that one or more are thus preternaturally enlightened, and invested with a commission to speak in the name of God to others; endowed at the same time, with such peculiar powers, such a control over nature, or such a foresight of future contingencies, as shall be sufficient to accredit and establish his mission.

He who refuses to submit to the guidance of persons thus attested and accredited, must be considered as virtually renouncing the revelation imparted, and, as the necessary consequence, forfeiting his interest in its blessings. On these grounds it is not difficult to perceive that a primitive convert, or rather pretended convert, who, without doubting that baptism, in the way in which we practise it, formed a part of the apostolic commission, had refused compliance, would have been deemed unworthy christian communion, not on account of any specific connexion betwixt the two ordinances, but on account of his evincing a spirit totally repugnant to the mind of Christ. By rejecting the only authority established upon earth for the direction of conscience, and the termination of doubts and controversies, he would, undoubtedly, have been repelled as a contumacious schismatic. But what imaginable resemblance is there betwixt such a mode of procedure, and the conduct of our pædobaptist brethren, who oppose no legitimate authority, impeach no part of the apostolic testimony, but mistaking (in our judgement at least) its import in one particular, decline a practice which many of them would be the first to comply with, were they once convinced it was the dictate of duty, and the will of heaven? In the one case, we perceive open rebellion, in the other, involuntary error; in the one, the pride which opposes itself to the dictates of inspired wisdom, in the other, a specimen (an humbling one it is true) of that infirmity, in consequence of which we all "see but in part, and know but in part." Since, whatever degree of prejudice or inattention we may be disposed to impute to the abetters of infant sprinkling, the principles on which they proceed are essentially different from those which could alone have occasioned the introduction of that practice in apostolic times, we are at a loss to conceive the propriety of classing them together, or of animadverting upon them with equal severity. The apostles would have repelled from their communion men, who, while they professed to be followers of Christ, refused submission to his inspired messengers; in other words, they would have rejected some of the worst of men: therefore, say our opponents, we feel ourselves justified in excluding multitudes whom we acknowledge to be the best. I am at a loss whether most to admire the logic, the equity, or the modesty of such a conclusion.

Besides, this reasoning from precedent is of so flexible a nature, that it may with equal ease be employed in a contrary direction, and be turned to the annoyance of our opponents. As it is an acknowledged fact, that in primitive times all the faithful were admitted to an equality of participation in every christian privilege; to repel the great majority of them on account of an error, acknowledged not to be fundamental, is at once a wide departure from the apostolic example, and a palpable contradiction to the very words employed in its first institution; "drink ye all of it; do this in remembrance of me:" words addressed, as has already been proved, to persons who had not received christian baptism. If it be replied, that though all christians originally communicated, yet from the period of the Pentecost, at least, they were all previously initiated by immersion, the inquiry returns, were they baptized on account of the necessary connexion of that appointment with the eucharist, or purely in deference to the apostolic injunction? To assert the former would be palpably begging the question; and if the latter is affirmed, we reply, that as they practised as they did, in deference to the will of God, so our pædobaptist brethren, in declining the practice which we adopt, regulate their conduct by the same principle.

The show of conformity to apostolic precedent is with the advocates of strict communion, and nothing more;

the substance and reality are with us. Their conformity is to the letter, ours to the spirit; theirs circumstantial and incidental, ours radical and essential. In withholding the signs from those who are in possession of the thing signified, in refusing to communicate the symbols of the great sacrifice to those who are equally with themselves sprinkled by its blood and sharers of its efficacy, in dividing the regenerate into two classes, believers and communicants, and confining the church to the narrow limit of a sect, they have violated more maxims of antiquity, and receded further from the example of the apostles, than any class of christians on record.

We live in a mutable world, and the diversity of sentiment which has arisen in the christian church on the subject of baptism, has placed things in a new situation, and has given birth to a case which can be determined only by an appeal to the general principles of the gospel, and to those injunctions in particular, which are designed to regulate the conduct of christians, whose judgement in in points of secondary moment differs. These we shall have occasion to discuss in another part of this treatise, where it will, we trust, be satisfactorily shown that we are furnished with a clue fully sufficient for our guidance; and when we consider the impossibility of comprehending, in any code whatever, every possible combination of future occurrences and events, we shall perceive the necessity of having recourse to those large and comprehensive maxims, which the prospective wisdom of the Father of lights, and the Author of revelation has abundantly supplied.

Were it not that more are capable of numbering arguments, than of weighing them, the mention of the following might be omitted. The significations of the two positive ordinances of the gospel are urged in proof of the necessity of baptism preceding the Lord's supper. The first, we are reminded by our opponents, is styled by theologians the sacrament of *regeneration*, or of initiation; the second, the sacrament of nutrition.* To argue

* "In submitting to baptism," says Mr. Booth, "we have an emblem of our union and communion with Jesus Christ, as our great Representative, in his death, burial, and resurrection. And as in baptism we profess to have renewed spiritual life, so in communicating at the Lord's table, we have the emblems of that heavenly food by which we grow, and by virtue of which we hope to live for ever. Hence theological writers have often called baptism the sacrament of *regeneration*, or of initiation, and the Lord's supper, the sacrament of *nutrition*."—*Booth's Apology.*

from metaphors is rarely a conclusive mode of reasoning; but if it were, the regenerate state of our pædobaptist brethren would surely afford a much better reason for admitting them to the *sacrament of nutrition*, than their misconception of a particular command for prohibiting them, unless we choose to affirm that the shadow is of more importance than the substance, or that the sacrament of nutrition is not intended to nourish.

Their actual possession of spiritual life, in consequence of their union to the Head of the church, necessarily implies a title to every christian privilege, by which such a life is cherished and maintained, unless there were an express prohibition to the contrary; nor is it to be doubted that the acknowledgement of pædobaptists, as christians, implies a competence to enter into the full import of the rites commemorative of our Lord's death and passion. To consider the Lord's supper, however, as a mere commemoration of that event, is to entertain a very inadequate view of it. If we credit St. Paul, it is also a *federal rite* in which, in token of our reconciliation with God, we eat and drink in his presence: it is a feast upon a sacrifice, by which we become partakers at the altar, not less really, though in a manner more elevated and spiritual, than those who under the ancient economy presented their offerings in the temple. In this ordinance, the cup is a spiritual participation of the blood, the bread of the body of the crucified Saviour:* and as our pædobaptist brethren are allowed to be in covenant with God, their title to every federal rite follows of course, unless it is barred by some clear, unequivocal, declaration of scripture; instead of which, we meet with nothing on the opposite side but precarious conjectures, and remote analogies.

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

Our opponents are extremely fond of representing baptism, under the New Testament, as essential as circumcision under the old, inferring from thence that no unbaptized person is admissible to the eucharist, for the same reason that no one who was not circumcised, was permitted to partake of the paschal feast. But besides that this is to reason from analogy, a practice against which, when applied to the discussion of positive institutes, they on other occasions earnestly protest, the analogy fails in the most essential points. Circumcision is expressly stated as a necessary condition of admission to the passover: a similar statement respecting baptism will decide the controversy. The neglect of circumcision, which could proceed from nothing but presumptuous impiety, incurred the sentence of *excision; that soul shall be cut off from the people.* Whatever may be meant beside that commination, it will not be doubted that it included the entire forfeiture of the advantages of that peculiar covenant, which God was pleased to establish with the Israelitish people: and the exclusion from the paschal feast, as well as from the other sacrifices, was the necessary appendage of that forfeiture.

The most violent baptist will not presume to insinuate that the neglect of baptism, from a misconception of its nature, is exposed to a similar penalty. It is evident, from the history of the Old Testament, that an Israelite became disqualified for sharing in whatever privileges distinguished that nation, only in consequence of such a species of criminality as cut him off from the covenant. An interest in that covenant (the particular nature of which it is not necessary to insist upon) and a free access to all the privileges and institutions of the Jewish people, were inseparable, so that nothing would have appeared to an ancient Jew more absurd, than to disunite the covenant itself from the federal rites by which it was ratified and confirmed. The invention of this ingenious paradox belongs exclusively to the abettors of strict communion, who in the same breath affirm that pædobaptists are entitled to all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, and forbidden to commemorate it; and scruple

not to assert, that though interested as much as themselves in the great sacrifice, it would be presumption in them to approach the sacred symbols, which are appointed for no other purpose but to hold it forth. It is certainly with a very ill grace that the champions of such monstrous and unparalleled positions, ridicule their opponents for inventing a new and eccentric theology.*

Before I dismiss this head, I must remark, that in insisting upon the prior claim which baptism possesses to the attention of a christian convert, the advocates of strict communion triumph without an opponent. We know of none who contend for the propriety of inverting the natural order of the christian sacraments, where they can both be attended to, that is, when the nature of each is clearly understood and confessed. To administer them under any other circumstance, it will be acknowledged, is impracticable. We administer baptism, let it be remembered, *in every instance* in which our opponents will allow it ought to be administered; and the only difference is, that we have fellowship, in another ordinance, with those members of the body of Christ whom they reject. Let it once be demonstrated that the obligation of commemorating the Saviour's death, is not sufficiently supported by his express injunction, but derives its force and validity from its inseparable connexion with a preceding sacrament, and we are prepared to abandon our practice, as a presumptuous innovation on the laws of Christ. Till then, we shall not be much moved by the

* "The last century," says Mr. Booth, page 36, "was the grand æra of improvement, of prodigious improvement, in light and liberty. In light, as well divine as philosophical, by the labours of a Bacon, a Boyle, and a Newton. In pretended theological knowledge, by those of a Jesse or a Bunyan. Did the former, by deep researches into the system of nature, surprise and instruct the world, by discoveries of which mankind had never before conceived? The latter, penetrating into the gospel system, amused mankind by casting new light on the positive institutions of Jesus Christ, and by placing baptism among things of little importance in the christian religion, of which no ancient theologian ever dreamed—none we have reason to think that ever loved the Lord Redeemer." A little after he adds, "The practical claim of dispensing power by Jesse and Bunyan, made way for the *inglorious* liberty of treating positive institutions in the house of God just as professors please"

charge of claiming a dispensing power, with which we are frequently accused,—a power which I presume no protestant ever dreamed of usurping, and the assumption of which implies such impiety as ought to render a christian reluctant to urge such a charge.

To remind us of "the destruction of Nadab and Abihu by fire from heaven, the breach that was made upon Uzzah, the stigma fixed, and the curses denounced upon Jerusalem, together with the fall and ruin of all mankind, by our first father's disobedience to a positive command," is more calculated to inflame the passions, than to elicit truth, or conduct the controversy to a satisfactory issue. When the sole inquiry is, what *is* the law of Christ, and we are fully persuaded that our interpretation of it is more natural and reasonable than that of our opponents, it is not a little absurd, to charge us with assuming a claim of dispensing with its authority. We know that he commanded his followers to be baptized; we know also that he commanded them to show forth his death till he came: but where shall we look for a tittle of his law which forbids such as sincerely, though erroneously, believe themselves to have complied with the first, to attend to the last of these injunctions? Where is the scriptural authority for *resting* the obligation of the eucharist, not on the precept that enjoins it, but on the previous reception of baptism? As the scripture is totally silent on this point, we are not disposed to accept the officious assistance of our brethren in supplying its deficiency; and beg permission to remind them, that to add to the word of God, is equally criminal with taking away from it.

Do we neglect the administration of that rite to any class of persons, whose state of mind is such as would render it acceptable to God? Do we neglect to illustrate and enforce it in our public ministrations? Are we accustomed to insinuate that serious inquiry into the mind of Christ on this subject, is of little or no importance? Are we found to decline its administration in any case whatever, in which our accusers would not equally decline it? Nothing of this can be alleged. Do they argue

from the language of the original institute, from the examples of scripture, and the precedent of the early ages, that it is the duty of believers, without exception, to be immersed in the name of Jesus? So do we. Are they disposed to look upon such as have neglected, whether from inattention or prejudice, to perform this duty, as *mistaken christians*? We also consider them in the same light. In what respect then are we guilty of dispensing with divine laws? Merely because we are incapable of perceiving that an involuntary mistake on this subject, disqualifies for christian communion. But how extremely unjust to load us, on that account, with the charge of assuming a dispensing power, when the only ground on which we maintain our opinion, whether true or false, is our conviction that it is founded on a legitimate interpretation of the oracles of God. The dispute is not concerning their authority, but their meaning; and we dispense with baptism in no other sense, than that of denying it to be in all cases essential to communion; in which whether we are mistaken or not, is a point open to controversy; but to be guilty first of a *misnomer* in defining our sentiments, and afterwards to convert an odious and erroneous appellation into an argument is the height of injustice.

With what propriety our practice is compared to that of the church of Rome, in confining the communion to one kind, the intelligent reader will be at no loss to perceive.* In that, as in various other instances, that church, in order to raise the dignity of the priesthood, assumes a power of mutilating a divine ordinance. We are

* "It must, I think, be acknowledged," says Mr. Booth, "even by our brethren themselves, that we have as good a warrant for omitting an essential branch of an ordinance, or to reverse the order in which the *constituent parts* of an ordinance were originally administered, as we have to lay aside a divine institution, or to change the order in which two different appointments were first fixed. And if so, were a reformed and converted catholic, still retaining the popish error of communion in *one kind* only, desirous of having fellowship with our brethren at the Lord's table, they must, if they would act consistently, on their present hypothesis, admit him to partake of the bread, though, from a principle of conscience, he absolutely refused the wine in that sacred institution."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 51.

chargeable with no mutilation, nor presume in the smallest particular to innovate in the celebration of either sacraments; we merely refuse to acknowledge that dependence, one upon the other, on which the confidence of our opponents is so ill sustained by the silence of scripture.

We will close this part of the discussion by remarking, that there is a happy equivocation in the word *dispense*, which has contributed not a little to its introduction into the present controversy. It may either mean that we do not insist upon baptism as an indispensable condition of communion, in which sense the charge is true, but nothing to the purpose, since it is a mere statement, in other words, of our actual practice: or it may intend that we knowingly and deliberately deviate from the injunctions of scripture; a serious accusation, which requires not to be asserted, but proved.

Section IV.

Our supposed Opposition to the Universal Suffrages of the Church, considered.

In admitting to our communion those whom we esteem *unbaptized*, we are accused of a presumptuous departure from the sentiments of all parties and denominations throughout the christian world, who, however they may have differed upon other subjects, have unanimously concurred in considering baptism as a necessary preliminary to communion.*

* This charge is urged with much declamatory vehemence by Mr. Booth, in his Apology:—"A sentiment so peculiar, and a conduct so uncommon," he says, "in regard to this institution, ought to be well supported by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. For were all the christian churches now in the world asked, except those few who plead for free communion, whether they thought it lawful to admit *unbaptized* believers to fellowship at the Lord's table, there is reason to believe they would readily unite in the declaration of Paul, *we have no such custom, neither the churches of God that were before us.* Yes, considering the novelty of their sentiments and conduct, and what a contradiction they are to the faith and order of the whole christian church; considering that it never was disputed, as far as I can learn, prior to the sixteenth century, by orthodox or heterodox, by papist or protestant, whether *unbaptized* believers should be admitted to the Lord's table, they all agreeing in the contrary practice, however much they differed in matters of equal importance; it may be reasonably expected, and it is by us justly demanded, that the truth of their sentiment, and the rectitude of their conduct, should be *proved, fully proved,* from the records of inspiration."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 43.

The first remark which occurs on this mode of reasoning is, that it is merely an *argumentum ad verecundiam*, an attempt to overawe by the weight of authority, without pretending to enter into the merits of the controversy. It assumes for its basis the impossibility of the universal prevalence of error, which if it be once admitted, all hopes of extending the boundaries of knowledge must be relinquished. My next observation is, that it comes with peculiar infelicity from the members of a sect, who upon a subject of much greater moment have presumed to relinquish the precedent, and arraign the practice of the whole christian world, as far at least as they have been exhibited in these later ages.

"Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes?"

After setting an example of revolt, it is too late for them to inculcate the duty of submission.

The question of the necessary dependence of communion on baptism, being of no practical moment whatever in any other circumstances than our own, it is not to be wondered at, if it has never been subjected to scrutiny; since cases of conscience, among which this inquiry may be classed, are rarely if ever investigated until circumstances occur which render their discussion necessary. But as infant sprinkling is valid in the esteem of all but the papists, and there is no pretence for considering the latter as unbaptized, it is not easy to conceive what motive could exist for making it an object of serious attention. That crude and erroneous conceptions should prevail upon questions, the decision of which could have no influence on practice, will not surprise those who reflect, that truth has been usually elicited by controversy, and that on subjects of too great importance to be entirely

overlooked, opinions have prevailed to a great extent, which are now universally exploded. Though the employment of coercion in the affairs of conscience, is equally repugnant to the dictates of reason and of scripture, it was for ages successively resorted to by every party in its turn; nor was it till towards the close of the seventeenth century that the principle of toleration was established on a broad and scientific basis, by the immortal writings of Milton and Locke. These reflections are obvious; but there are others which tend more immediately to annihilate the objection under consideration. It is well known that from a very early period the most extravagant notions prevailed in the church with respect to the efficacy of baptism, and its absolute necessity in order to attain salvation. The descent of the human mind from the spirit to the letter, from what is vital and intellectual, to what is ritual and external in religion, is the true source of idolatry and superstition in all the multifarious forms they have assumed; and as it began early to corrupt the religion of nature, or more properly of patriarchal tradition, so it soon obscured the lustre, and destroyed the simplicity of the christian institute. In proportion as genuine devotion declined, the love of pomp and ceremony increased; the few and simple rites of christianity were extolled beyond all reasonable bounds; new ones were invented, to which mysterious meanings were attached, till the religion of the New Testament became, in process of time, as insupportable a yoke as the Mosaic law. The first effects of this spirit are discernible in the ideas entertained of the ordinance, so closely connected with the subject of the present treatise. From an erroneous interpretation of the figurative language of a few passages in scripture, in which the sign is identified with the thing signified, very similar to the mistake which afterwards led to transubstantiation, it was universally supposed that baptism was invariably accompanied with a supernatural effect, which totally changed the state and character of the candidate, and constituted him a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Hence it was almost constantly denoted

by the terms *illumination*, *regeneration*, and others, expressive of the highest operations of the Spirit; and as it was believed to obtain the plenary remission of all past sins, it was often, in order to insure that benefit, purposely deferred to the latest period of life. Thus Eusebius informs us that the Emperor Constantine, "finding his end fast approaching, judged it a fit season for purifying himself from his offences, and cleansing his soul from that guilt which, in common with other mortals, he had contracted, which he believed was to be effected by the power of mysterious words, and the saving laver." "This," said he, addressing the surrounding bishops, "is the period I have so long hoped and prayed for, the period of obtaining the salvation of God." Passing with the utmost rapidity through the preparatory stage, that of a catechumen, he hastened to what he regarded as his consummation; and no sooner was the ceremony completed, than he arrayed himself in white garments, and laid aside the imperial purple, in token of his bidding adieu to all secular concerns.* We have here a fair specimen of the sentiments which were universally adopted upon this subject in ancient times. Even Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century, confounds baptism with regeneration. "Whoever," says he, "believe the things which are affirmed by us to be true, and promise to live accordingly, are afterwards conducted to a place where there is water, and are regenerated by the same method of regeneration which we have experienced."† Theophilus, a contemporary writer, and the sixth bishop of Antioch, holds the same language. Tertullian, the earliest and most learned of the Latin fathers, exclaims with rapture, "O happy sacrament, by which, being washed from the former sins of our blindness, we are delivered unto eternal life."‡ And agreeable to the fantastic style of imagery which characterizes his writings, he appears to be particularly delighted with denominating christians, little fishes, who are born in water, and are

* Eusebius in Vitâ Constantini, lib. iv. c. 61, 62.
† Apol. p. 159, Ed. 1651.
‡ De Baptismo, Ed. 1676, p. 224.

safe only in that element. Were we to attempt accurately to trace the progress of these opinions, in the first ages, and adequately to represent the extent of their prevalence, we should be under the necessity, by numberless quotations from the fathers, of extending this inquiry to a most unreasonable length.

Suffice it to remark, that there is scarcely a writer in the three first centuries, to descend no lower, who has not spoken upon this subject in a manner, which the advocates for strict communion, at least, would deem unscriptural and improper: scarcely one, from whom we should not be taught to infer that baptism was absolutely necessary to salvation. That this is the doctrine which pervades the formularies of the church of England, is too evident to require to be insisted on; nor is it less so, that similar sentiments on this head, are exhibited, to a greater or less extent, in the creeds of most, if not all established churches. Is it surprising then, that those who contend for baptism as essential to salvation, should consider it as an essential prerequisite to communion? Or is it not a much juster occasion for surprise, that our opponents should urge us with an inference which it is acknowledged was deduced from erroneous premises, as though we were under the necessity of admitting a conclusion, while the only argument by which it is supported is given up? *

For our parts, we must be permitted to look with suspicion on the genuine product of error; no more expecting to derive truth from erroneous premises, than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. In the present instance, there is no doubt that the opinion of the absolute necessity of baptism, previous to communion, sprang from those lofty and superstitious ideas repecting its efficacy,

* Considering the firm hold which these unscriptural ideas respecting baptism had taken of the minds of men, throughout all parts of the christian world, at an early period, and recollecting the confidence with which ancient writers assert the impossibility even of infants being saved without baptism, the practice of infant sprinkling seems an almost necessary result. Who, with such a conviction, possessed of the common feelings of a parent, could fail to secure to his offspring such infinite benefits?

which our opponents would be the first to disclaim. Ask a Roman Catholic, a Lutheran, or a member of the church of England, on what ground he rests the absolute necessity of the baptismal rite, as a qualification for the eucharist; and each of them will concur in reminding you, that it is by that ordinance we become the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. The Augsburg Confession, to which all the Lutheran churches are supposed to assent, and which was solemnly presented to Charles the Fifth at the imperial diet, as the authentic exhibition of their sentiments, expresses itself in the following terms:—"Concerning baptism, they (the followers of Luther), teach that it is *necessary to salvation;* that by baptism is offered the grace of God; and that children are to be baptized, who, being presented to God by baptism, are received into the grace of God. They condemn the anabaptists, who disapprove of the baptism of children and affirm that children are *saved* without baptism." * Some of the most learned divines of the church of England have contended that baptism is not only regeneration, but justification; and have made elaborate attempts to explode every other notion of that blessing.†

Such are the principles whence this vaunted unanimity is derived; principles which our brethren reprobate on all occasions, while with a strange inconsistency, they accuse us of presumption in refusing our assent to their legitimate consequences. Let it be recollected also, that the points in which they, in common with ourselves, dissent from a vast majority of the professors of christianity, are of incomparably more importance than the particulars in which they agree; for whether baptism be, on all occasions, a necessary preliminary to communion, is a trivial question, compared to that which respects the identity of baptism with regeneration.

The argument from authority, however, when fairly stated, is entirely in our favour; nor would it be easy to assign an example of bolder deviation from the universal

* Augsburg Confession, Article IX.
† See Waterland's Sermon on that subject

practice of the christian church, than the conduct of our opponents supplies. They are the only persons in the world of whom we have either heard or read, who contend for the exclusion of genuine christians from the Lord's table; who ever attempted to distinguish them into classes, such as are entitled to commemorate their Saviour's death, and such as are excluded from that privilege. In what page of the voluminous records of the church is such a distinction to be traced? Or what intimation shall we find in scripture of an intention to create such an invidious disparity among the members of the same body? Did it ever enter the conception of any but baptists, that a right to the sign could be separated from the thing signified; or that there could be a description of persons interested in all the blessings of the christian covenant, yet not entitled to partake of its sacraments and seals?

In the judgement of all religious communities besides, and in every period of the church, excommunication or exclusion has been considered as a stigma, never to be inflicted but on men of ill lives, or on the abettors of heresy and schism; and though innumerable instances have occurred, in which the best of men have, in fact, been excluded, they were either accused of fundamental error, or adjudged, on account of their obstinate resistance to the authority of the church, to have forfeited the privileges of christians. They were not excommunicated under the character of mistaken brethren, which is the light in which we profess to consider pædobaptists, but as incurable heretics and schismatics. The puritans were expelled the church of England on the same principle; and although at the restoration, a vindictive spirit was unquestionably the chief motive to those disgraceful proceedings, yet the pretensions of ecclesiastical authority were carried so high in those unhappy times, as to furnish the pretext for considering them as contumacious contemners of the power, and disturbers of the peace of the church. In the whole course of ecclesiastical proceedings, no maxim was more fully recognised, than that the sword of excommunication cut asunder the ties of fraternity, and consigned the offender, unless he repented, to hopeless perdition.

In some dissenting societies also, it is true, creeds are established which every candidate for admission is expected to subscribe; and though these summaries of christian doctrine frequently contain articles, which, admitting them to be true, are not fundamental, they were originally deemed such by their fabricators, or supposed, at least, to be accompanied with such a plenitude of evidence as no sincere inquirer could resist; and they are continued under the same persuasion.

The right of rejecting those whom Christ has received; of refusing the communion of eminently holy men, on account of unessential differences of opinion, is not the avowed tenet of any sect or community in Christendom, with the exception of the majority of the baptists, who, while they are at variance with the whole world on a point of such magnitude, are loud in accusing their brethren of singularity. If we have presumed to resist the current of opinion, it is on a subject of no practical moment; it respects an obscure and neglected corner of theology; while their singularity is replete with most alarming consequences, destroys at once the unity of the church, and pronounces a sentence of excommunication on the whole christian world.

Having, without disguise, exhibited, in their full force, the reasoning of the advocates of strict communion, and replied to it in the best manner we are able, it must be left to the impartial reader to determine on which side the evidence preponderates; of which he will be able to judge more completely, when we have stated at large the grounds of the opposite practice, which we have reserved for the Second Part of this treatise; where we shall have an opportunity of noticing some minor objections, which could not be so conveniently adverted to in the former.

PART II.

THE POSITIVE GROUNDS ON WHICH WE JUSTIFY THE PRACTICE OF MIXED COMMUNION.

SECTION I.

Free Communion urged, from the Obligation of Brotherly Love.

THAT we are commanded, in terms the most absolute, to cultivate a sincere and warm attachment to the members of Christ's body, and that no branch of christian duty is inculcated more frequently, or with more force, will be admitted without controversy. Our Lord instructs us to consider it as the principal mark or feature by which his followers are to be distinguished in every age. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. As I have loved you, ye ought also to love one another;" whence it is evident that the pattern we are to follow is the love which Christ bore to his church, which is undoubtedly extended indiscriminately to every member. The cultivation of this disposition is affirmed to be one of the most essential objects of the christian revelation, as well as the most precious fruit of that faith by which it is embraced. "Seeing," says St. Peter, "ye have purified your hearts by obeying the truth, unto an unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Agreeably to which, the beloved disciple affirms it to be the chief evidence of our being in a state of grace and salvation. "By this we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Let it also be remembered, that the mode in which we are commanded to exhibit and express this most eminent

grace of the Spirit, is the preservation of union, a careful avoidance of every temper and practice which might produce alienation and division. To this purpose, St. Paul reminds us of that union which subsists betwixt the several parts of the body, the harmony with which its respective functions are carried on, where the noblest organ is incapable of dispensing with the action of the meanest, together with that quick feeling of sympathy which pervades the whole; all which, he tells us, is contrived and adjusted to prevent a schism in the body. In applying this illustration to the subject before us, it is impossible not to perceive that when one part of Christ's mystical body refuses to co-operate with another in a principal spiritual function, such as communing at the Lord's table, that very evil subsists against which we are so anxiously guarded; and, what is more extraordinary, subsists upon the principle we are opposing, by divine appointment. In the last prayer our Saviour uttered, in which he expressly includes all who should hereafter believe, he earnestly intreats that they may be all one, even as he and his Father were one, that the world might be furnished with a convincing evidence of his mission. For some ages the object of that prayer was realized, in the harmony which prevailed amongst christians, whose religion was a bond of union more strict and tender than the ties of consanguinity; and with the appellation of brethren, they associated all the sentiments of endearment that relation implied. To see men of the most contrary character and habits, the learned and the rude, the most polished and the most uncultivated, the inhabitants of countries alienated from each other by institutions the most repugnant, and by contests the most violent, forgetting their ancient animosity, and blending into one mass, at the command of a person whom they had never seen, and who had ceased to be an inhabitant of this world, was an astonishing spectacle. Such a sudden assimilation of the most discordant materials, such love issuing from hearts naturally selfish, and giving birth to a new race and progeny, could be ascribed to nothing but a divine interposition: it was an experimental proof

of the commencement of that kingdom of God, that celestial economy, by which the powers of the future world are imparted to the present. When we turn from contemplating this, to the practice under consideration, we see an opposite phenomenon; a sect of christians coming to an open rupture and separation in point of communion with the whole christian world; and we ask whether it be possible to reconcile such a conduct with the import of our Saviour's prayer. If it is not, it must be condemned as anti-christian, unless we hesitate to affirm, that whatever is repugnant to the mind of Christ merits that appellation. Let it be remembered, too, that though the prayer we have adduced was uttered by Him who possessed a perfect knowledge of futurity, and was thoroughly apprised of the diversities of sentiment which would arise among his followers, he was not deterred by that consideration from comprehending in this his desire of union, all who should hereafter believe on his name.

Whatever attachment our opponents may profess to those whom they exclude, their behaviour, it must be acknowledged, is so ill adapted to accredit their professions, that, in the eyes of the world, who judge by sensible appearances, and are strangers to subtle distinctions, such a proceeding will inevitably be considered as a practical declaration that the persons from whom they separate, are *not* christians. There is no reason to doubt that the precepts of the gospel on this, as well as every other branch of morals, are to be interpreted on a liberal scale; and that when they enjoin any particular disposition in general terms, we must consider the injunction as comprehending all its natural demonstrations, all its genuine expressions. But to refuse the communion of sincere christians, is not a natural expression of christian love, but so diametrically opposite, that we may fairly put it to the conscience of those who contend for such a measure, whether they find it possible to carry it into execution, without an inward struggle, without feeling emotions of sorrow and concern. It is to inflict a wound on the very heart of charity, for no fault, for none at least of which the offender is conscious, for none which such

treatment has the remotest tendency to correct; and if this is not being guilty of "beating our fellow-servant," we must despair of ascertaining the meaning of terms.

Were the children of the same parent, in consequence of the different construction they put on a disputed clause in their father's will, to refuse to eat at the same table, or to drink out of the same cup, it would be ridiculous for them to pretend that their attachment to each other remained undiminished; nor is it less so for christians to assert that their withdrawing from communion with their brethren, is no interruption to their mutual harmony and affection. It is a serious and awful interruption, and will ever be considered in that light as long as the interior sentiments of the mind continue to be interpreted by their natural signs. I have known more instances than one of good men complaining of the uneasiness, I might say the anguish, they felt on those occasions, when they witnessed some of their most intimate friends, persons of exalted piety, compelled, after joining in the other branches of worship, to withdraw from the Lord's table, as though "they had no part or lot in the matter." We have been accustomed to conceive that the dictates of the Holy Ghost were always in harmony with his operations, the precepts of the gospel with its spirit; and that nothing was enjoined as matter of duty on christians, which offered violence to the best feelings of the renewed heart. We have always supposed that, by the law of Christ, we were called to mortify the old man only with his affections and lusts; but if the doctrine of our opponents be true, we shall be frequently summoned to the strange discipline of repressing the movements of christian charity; and the practice of quenching the Spirit, instead of being regarded with horror, will become on many occasions an indispensable duty. For this new and unheard-of conflict, in which the injunctions of Christ, and the dictates of his Spirit, propel us in opposite directions, we acknowledge ourselves unprepared.

In order to place this part of our subject in its strongest light, it is necessary to recur to what we have suggested before, respecting the two-fold import of the eucha-

rist, that it is first a feast upon a sacrifice, in which we are actual partakers by faith of the body and blood of the Redeemer offered upon the cross. Considered in this view, it is a *federal rite*, in which we receive the pledge of reconciliation, while we avouch the Lord to be our God, and surround his table as a part of his family. In its secondary import, it is intended as a solemn recognition of each other as members of Christ, and consequently, in the language of St. Paul, "as one body, and one bread." Now we either acknowledge pædobaptists to be christians, or we do not. If not, let us speak out without reserve, and justify their exclusion at once, upon a broad and consistent basis. But if we reject a sentiment so illiberal, why refuse to unite with them in an appointment, which, as far as its social import is concerned, has no other object than to express that fraternal attachment which we actually feel? Why select as the line of demarcation, the signal of disunion, that particular branch of worship, which, if we credit the inspired writers, was ordained, in preference to every other, to be the symbol of christian unity? That they are equally capable with ourselves of deriving the spiritual edification and improvement attached to this ordinance, is implied in the acknowledgement of their being christians; while with respect to its import as a social act, or an act of communion, it implies neither more nor less than a recognition of their claim to that title. It neither implies that they are baptized, nor the contrary; it has no retrospective view to that ordinance whatever; it implies neither more nor less than that they are members of Christ, and the objects consequently of that fraternal attachment, which our opponents themselves profess to feel.

Section II.

The Practice of Open Communion argued, from the express Injunction of Scripture respecting the Conduct to be maintained by sincere Christians who differ in their Religious Sentiments.

We are expressly commanded in the Scriptures to tolerate in the church those diversities of opinion which are not inconsistent with salvation. We learn from the New Testament that a diversity of views subsisted in the times of the apostles, betwixt the Jewish and Gentile converts especially, the former retaining an attachment to the ancient law, and conceiving the most essential parts of it to be still in force; the latter, from correcter views, rejecting it altogether. Some declined the use of certain kinds of meat forbidden by Moses, which others partook of without scruple: "one man esteemed one day above another," conscientiously observing the principal Jewish solemnities; "another esteemed every day alike." Among the Jewish converts, very different sentiments were entertained on the subject of circumcision, which all appear to have observed, though upon different principles; the more enlightened, like St. Paul, from a solicitude to avoid unnecessary offence; the more superstitious, from persuasion of its intrinsic obligation; and some because they believed it impossible to be saved without it; by which they endangered, to say the least, the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. Against the sentiment last mentioned, we find St. Paul protesting with vehemence, and affirming, with all the authority of his office, that "if any man was circumcised" with such views, Christ "profited him nothing;" but on no occasion proceeding to excommunication. The contention arising from the discussion of these points became so violent, that there appeared no method of terminating it, but to depute Paul and Barnabas to go up to Jerusalem, to consult the apostles, who, being solemnly convened on the occasion, issued the famous decree contained in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, by which the

liberty of the gospel was confirmed, and the domineering spirit of Jewish zealots repressed. Though the success of this measure was great, it was not complete; a contrariety of opinion and of practice prevailed in the church respecting Jewish ceremonies and observances, which considerably impaired its harmony. But instead of attempting to silence the remaining differences, by interposing his authority, St. Paul enjoins mutual toleration. "Him that is weak in faith receive ye, not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? unto his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." *

To the same purpose are the following injunctions in the next chapter:—"We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Now the God of peace and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ, that ye may with one mind, and with one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."† It cannot be denied that the passages we have adduced contain an apostolic canon for the regulation of the conduct of such christians as agree in fundamentals, while they differ on points of subordinate importance: by this canon they are commanded to exercise a reciprocal toleration and indulgence, and on no account to proceed to an open rupture. In order to apply it to the question under consideration, it is only necessary to consider to what description of persons the rule extends. The persons we are commanded to receive are the *weak in faith*. From the context, as well as from other parts of his epistles, it is certain that St. Paul means to designate by that appellation, sincere

* Rom. xiv. 1—5 † Rom. xv. 1, 6, 7.

though erring christians; and in the instance then under contemplation, persons whose organs were not yet attempered to the blaze of gospel light and liberty, but who still clung to certain legal usages and distinctions, which more comprehensive views of revelation would have taught them to discard. The term *weak* is employed by the same writer in his epistle to the Corinthians, to denote an *erroneous* conscience, founded on a false persuasion of a certain power and efficacy attached to idols, of which they are really destitute. "For himself," he tells us, "he knew that an idol was nothing, but every one was not possessed of that knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol, with an interior conviction of its power, eat of the sacrifice, as a thing offered to an idol, and their conscience being *weak*, is defiled." In the chapter whence these words are quoted, the term *weak* occurs not less than five times, and in each instance is used as synonymous with *erroneous*. I have insisted the more on this particular, in order to obviate a misconception which may arise from the acknowledged ambiguity of the word *weak*, which might be supposed to intend not a mistaken or erring mind, but a mind not sufficiently confirmed in the truth to which it assents. The certainty of its comprehending the case of error being once admitted, it is not necessary to multiply words to evince its bearing on the present controversy; all that remains to be considered is the *principle* on which toleration is enforced, which every impartial reader must perceive, is the assumption that the errors and mistakes to be tolerated are not *fundamental*, not of such a nature, in other words, as to prevent those who maintain them from being accepted with God. "Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; *for God hath received him.*" What can this mean but that the error in question, to whichsoever side it be imputed, was of a description not to exclude its abettor from being an accepted servant of God, who, as he at present bears with his infirmity, is well able, whenever he pleases, to correct and remove it? He further proceeds to urge a

spirit of forbearance from a consideration of the perfect integrity with which both parties maintained their respective opinions. Both were equally conscientious, and therefore neither deserved to be treated with severity. "Wherefore receive ye one another," he adds, "even as Christ has received you to the glory of the Father." When he thus commands christians to receive each other, and enforces that duty by the example of Christ, it surely requires little penetration to perceive that the practice enjoined ought to be commensurate to that example, and that this precept obliges us to receive all whom Christ has received. To interpret it otherwise, is to suppose the example irrelevant, and at once to annihilate the principle on which the injunction is founded.

Having paved the way to the conclusion to which we would conduct the reader, we have only to remark, that in order to determine how far these apostolic injunctions oblige us to tolerate the supposed error of our pædobaptist brethren, we have merely to consider whether it necessarily excludes them from being of the number of those whom Christ has received, to the glory of the Father, whether it be possible to hold it with christian sincerity, and finally, whether its abettors will stand or fall in the eternal judgement.

If these questions are answered in the way which christian candour irresistibly suggests, and which the judgement of our opponents approves, they conclude in favour of the admission of pædobaptists to communion, not less forcibly than if they had been mentioned by name; and all attempts to evade them must prove futile and abortive. If it be asserted, on the contrary, that a mistake on the subject of baptism is not comprehended in the above description, the passages adduced must be acknowledged irrelevant, and the whole controversy assumes a new aspect.

In the same spirit the apostle earnestly presses on the Philippians the obligation of maintaining an uninterrupted harmony, and of cultivating a fraternal affection to each other, even while he is contemplating the possibility of their entertaining different apprehensions respecting truth and duty. After proposing himself as an example of the renunciation of legal hopes, and the serious study of perfection, he adds, "Let us, therefore, as many as are *perfect*, as many as have obtained correct and enlarged views of the gospel, be thus minded; and if in any thing we are otherwise minded, or rather *differently* minded, possessing different views and apprehensions on certain subjects, God will reveal even this unto you.* Nevertheless, wherein we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Here the case of a diversity of sentiment arising among christians is distinctly assumed, and the proper remedy suggested, which is, not the exercise of a compulsory power, much less a separation of communion, but the ardent pursuit of christian piety, accompanied with a humble dependence on divine teaching, which it may reasonably be expected will in due time correct the errors and imperfections of sincere believers. The conduct to be maintained in the mean while, was a cordial co-operation in every branch of worship and of practice, with respect to which they were agreed, without attempting to effect a unanimity by force; and this is precisely the conduct which we contend should be maintained towards our pædobaptist brethren. If they can be repelled from the Lord's table, without violating both the letter and the spirit of the preceding and of similar admonitions, we are prepared, however reluctantly, to acquiesce in their exclusion; but if they cannot, it deserves the serious consideration of the advocates of that measure, how they can reconcile the palpable infringement of such precepts with the scrupulous adherence to the dictates of scripture to which they make such loud pretensions.

It will surely not be denied that the precepts of the gospel are entitled to at least as much reverence as apostolical precedents, when it is remembered that the language of the former, as is befitting laws, is clear and determinate, while inferences deduced from the

* See an admirable criticism on this passage in Bishop Horsley's Sermons, where the word ἕτερως, which is the key to the whole passage, is most happily elucidated.—Vol. ii. p. 358.

latter are frequently subject to debate; not to remark, that if we consider the spirit of scripture precedent, it will be found entirely in our favour.

When the abettors of exclusive communion are pressed with the conclusions resulting from the passages we have quoted, and others of a similar tendency, their usual answer is, that the inspired writers make no mention of baptism on these occasions, and that no allusion is had to a diversity of opinion on the positive institutions of the gospel; which is perfectly true, and perfectly foreign to the purpose for which it is alleged; for the question at issue is not, What were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate; but, What is the *ground* on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the pædobaptists? That it is so, that they are actually included, can only be denied by affirming that they are precluded from divine acceptance, since it is precisely on that ground that St. Paul rests the plea of toleration. To object to the application of a general principle to a particular case, that it is not the identical one which first occasioned its enunciation, is egregious trifling, and would go to the subversion of all general principles whatever, and consequently put an end to all reasoning. When a doubtful point in morality is to be decided by an appeal to a general principle, it is an essential property of such a principle to extend to more particulars than one; since, if it did not, it would cease to be a principle, and the point in question would be left to be decided by itself; and if not self-evident, could admit of no decision whatever. When Nabab and Abihu, intoxicated with wine, offered strange fire upon the altar, and were struck with instant death for their presumption, Moses by divine command prescribed the following general rule for the worship of God: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh to me, and before all the people I will be glorified."* Who can be at a loss to perceive the absurdity of limiting that precept to the prohibition of intoxication, the crime

* Lev. x. 3.

which occasioned its first promulgation, instead of extending it to every instance of levity and impiety in an approach to the divine Majesty? My consciousness of the extreme weight of prejudice which the truth has to encounter, together with the inaptitude of many who are most interested in this controversy to ascend to first principles, is my only apology for insisting upon a point so obvious; choosing rather to hazard the contempt of the wise, than not to impress conviction on the vulgar.

With such as admit the possibility of pædobaptists being saved, there remains, in my apprehension, no alternative, but either to receive them into their communion without scruple, as comprehended within the apostolic canon, or to affirm that decision to be founded on erroneous grounds; which at once removes the controversy to a superior tribunal, where they and the apostle must implead each other. Let us, however, briefly examine certain distinctions they have recourse to, in order to elude the force of these passages. In the first place it has been alleged, that though we are commanded to *receive* our mistaken brethren, we are not instructed to receive them at the Lord's table, or into the external communion of the church; and that such injunctions are consequently irrelevant to the inquiry respecting the right of persons of a similar character to those external privileges of which they make no mention. "Is there no way," say our opponents, "of receiving him that is weak in faith, but by admitting him to the Lord's table? Must the exhortation to receive a christian brother be confined to that single instance of true benevolence?"* To this we reply, that we know of none who assert that the term *receive* must necessarily be limited to the single act of a reception at the Lord's table; but we affirm, without hesitation, that he is not *received* in the sense of the apostle, who is denied that privilege. Had the parties whom he addressed proceeded to an open rupture in point of communion, would they, in the judgement of our opponents, have complied with the purport and spirit

* Booth's Apology, p. 101.

of his injunction? And if, after adopting such a measure, they had appealed to the apostle, whether there "were no other way of receiving their brethren but by admitting them to the Lord's table," would he, or would he not, have considered himself as mocked and insulted? Mr. Booth enumerates many instances in St. Paul's epistles, in which he enjoins christians to *receive* certain persons, such as Phœbe, Onesimus, Epaphroditus, and himself, where an admission to the Lord's table was not intended, but something which he informs us would manifest their love in a much higher degree.* What a convincing demonstration of the propriety of withholding from persons of a similar character, that lower, that inferior token of esteem which is included in christian fellowship! And because the bare admission of all the persons mentioned to the external communion of the church, did not satisfy the ardent benevolence of the apostle, without more decided and discriminate marks of attachment, nor answer, in the opinion of our opponents, to the full import of the word *receive*, the true method of realizing his intentions, is to reject the modern Phœbe and Onesimus altogether.

"Supposing, however," says Mr. Booth, "that there were no way of receiving one that is weak in faith, but by admitting him to the Lord's table, this text would be far from proving that which our opponents desire; unless they could make it appear, that the persons of whom the apostle immediately speaks, were *not members* of the church of Rome, when he gave the advice."† If there be any weight in this argument, it must proceed from the supposition, that if the persons whom the apostle enjoins the Romans to receive, had not been already members, there is no sufficient ground for believing, notwithstanding the strain of his admonitions, that they would have been admitted. But is it possible to suppose that he would have recommended a class of persons so earnestly to the affectionate regards of a christian society whom he would

* Booth's Apology, p. 102. † Ibid. p. 82.

not have previously deemed eligible to their communion; or that the primitive discipline was so soon relaxed as to occasion the continuance in the church of such as would have been originally deemed unworthy candidates? Most assuredly they who, upon valid grounds, would have been rejected, if they had not already been members, were never permitted to boast the protection and patronage of an inspired apostle after they became such. In every well-ordered society, the privileges attached to it are forfeited by that conduct in its members, whatever it be, which would have been an effectual obstacle to their admission; and to suppose this maxim reversed in a christian church, and that an apostle would caress, protect, and commend persons who might justly have been debarred from entering, is an absurdity which few minds can digest. The necessity of recurring to such suppositions, is itself a sufficient confutation of the system they are brought to defend.

Our opponents still insist upon it, that no conclusion can be drawn from the command to receive the *weak in faith*, unless it could be shown that they were *unbaptized*. But this mode of reasoning, pursued to its consequences, would annihilate all the general axioms of scripture,* and considering the infinite diversity of human circumstances, render them a most incompetent guide. If the Holy Spirit has been pleased to command us, without exception, to receive *the weak in faith*, and instructed us in the grounds on which his decision proceeded, which is plainly the acceptance of such with God; if the apostles, acting under his direction, governed the church on the same principles, and suffered no breach of communion to be effected, but on account of a vicious life, or fundamental error, the criminality attached to an opposite course of procedure will be very little extenuated by a circumstantial difference in its objects. Had those whom

* "But admitting that to be a fact," says Mr. Booth, "of which there is not the least evidence, the conclusion drawn from the passage would not be just, except it were also proved, that the weak in faith were unbaptized, or at least so considered by their stronger brethren, for that is the point in dispute between us."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 104.

the apostles commanded their converts to tolerate, been *unbaptized*, the inference in favour of pædobaptists would unquestionably have been more obvious, but not more certain, because nothing can be more evident than that they urged the duty of toleration on a principle which, even in the judgements of our opponents, equally applies to the pædobaptists, which is, that the error in each case is compatible with a state of salvation, and may be held with an upright conscience.

However systems and opinions may fluctuate, truth is eternal; and if these were solid grounds of mutual forbearance and indulgence heretofore, they must still continue such; but if they were not, St. Paul must be acknowledged to have reasoned inconclusively, and all idea of plenary inspiration must be abandoned. As the case stands, the advocates of exclusive communion must either assert, in direct contradiction to his statement, that the compatibility of an error with a state of salvation, and with what comes nearly to the same point, the perfect sincerity of its abettor, is *not* a sufficient reason for its being tolerated in the church, or consign the pædobaptists, who die in their sentiments, to eternal destruction. In this dilemma, they are at liberty to adopt which position they please, but from both it is impossible to escape.

In order, as it should seem, to perplex the mind of the reader on this part of the subject, our opponents endeavour to confound that interposition of mercy, by which impenitent sinners are introduced into a state of salvation, with the gracious acceptance of believers.*

With this view we are reminded that God receives

* "Yet permit me to ask," says Mr. Booth, "is the divine conduct, is the favour of God, or the kindness of Christ in receiving sinners, the rule of our proceeding in the administration of positive institutions? Whom does God, whom does Christ receive? None but those who believe and profess faith in the Lord Messiah? Our brethren will not affirm it. For if divine compassion did not extend to the dead in sin; if the kindness of Christ did not relieve the enemies of God, none of our fallen race could ever be saved. But does it hence follow that we must admit the unbelieving, or the unconverted, either to baptism or the holy supper? Our gracious Lord freely accepts all that desire it, and all that come, but are we bound to receive every one that solicits communion with us?"—*Booth's Apology*, p. 106.

such as are dead in sins. Whether it be safe to assert that God accepts the impenitent at all, while their impenitence continues, I shall not stay to inquire: it is certain they are not received in the *same sense* as genuine christians, nor in the sense the apostle intended when he enjoined forbearance towards the *weak in faith*. That Christ receives men *in their sins*, so as to adopt them into his family, and make them heirs of eternal life, is a doctrine offensive to pious ears, most remote from the language of scripture, and from all sober theology. But if they intend something essentially distinct from this, for what purpose it is introduced, except with a view to shelter themselves under the cover of an ambiguous term, I am at a loss to conjecture. In the mean time, it is obvious that the design of these contortions is to get rid, if possible, of a principle which originated not with us, but with St. Paul, that we ought to accept those whom we acknowledge Christ to have accepted. This is still more evident; when we find them adducing the excommunication of unworthy members, such as the incestuous man at Corinth, who it is asserted was all along an object of divine favour, as a proof that the rule which that inspired writer has laid down, may be safely neglected. In reply to which, it is sufficient to ask—In what light was the incestuous person regarded,* when he declared his determination to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Was it under the character of a member of Christ, or an enemy of the gospel? If we believe his own representation, he deemed it necessary for him to be expelled as an infectious leaven, the continuance of which would corrupt the whole mass; so that whatever proofs of repentance he might afterwards exhibit, these could have no influence on the principle on which he was excluded. When the professors of

* "Besides, gospel churches," says Mr. Booth, "are sometimes obliged to exclude from their communion those whom he has received, as appears from the case of the incestuous person in the church at Corinth. And have those churches which practise free communion never excluded any for scandalous backslidings, whom, notwithstanding, they could not but consider as received of Christ?"—*Booth's Apology*, p. 106.

christianity are guilty of deliberate violation of the laws of Christ, they are to be treated agreeably to the conduct they exhibit, as bad men, with a hope that the severity of discipline may reclaim and restore them to the paths of rectitude.

To justify the practice of exclusive communion, by placing pædobaptists, who form the great body of the faithful, on the same level with men of impure and vicious lives, is equally repugnant to reason, and offensive to charity; at the same time that it is manifest from this mode of reasoning, that the measure contended for is considered in the light of *punishment*. Whether our pædobaptist brethren are the proper objects of it, or whether it is adapted to promote the only legitimate ends of punishment, must be left to future inquiry.

Section III.

Pædobaptists a Part of the true Church, and their Exclusion, on that account, Unlawful.

Before we proceed to urge the argument announced in this section, it will be necessary to ascertain the precise import of the word *church*, as it is employed in the Holy Scriptures. If we examine the New Testament, we shall find that the term church, as a religious appellation, occurs in two senses only; it either denotes the whole body of the faithful, or some one assembly of christians associated for the worship of God. In the former sense, it is styled in the Apostles' Creed, catholic, or universal; a belief in the existence of which, forms one of its principal articles. In this sense, Jesus Christ is affirmed to be "Head over all things to the church, which is his body." It is in this collective view of it, that we affirm its perpetuity. When the term is employed to denote a particular assembly of christians, it is invariably accompanied with a specification of the place where it was accustomed to convene, as for example, the church at Corinth, at Ephesus, or at Rome. Now it is manifest

from scripture, that these two significations of the word differ from each other only as a part differs from a whole, so that when the whole body of believers is intended, it is used in its absolute form; when a particular society is meant, it is joined with a local specification. It is never used in the New Testament, as in modern times, to denote the aggregate of christian assemblies throughout a province, or a kingdom; nor do we ever read of the church of Achaia, Galatia, &c. but of the churches in the plural number; the word being constantly applied either to the whole number of the faithful, scattered throughout the world, or to some single congregation or society. It is equally obvious that whenever the word church occurs in its absolute form, it comprehends all genuine christians without exception, and as that church is affirmed to be *his body*, it could not enter into the conception of the inspired writers that there were a class of persons strictly united to Christ, who yet were none of its competent parts.

By orthodox christians it is uniformly maintained that union to Christ is formed by faith, and as the baptists are distinguished by demanding a profession of it at baptism, they at least are precluded from asserting that rite to have any concern in effecting the spiritual alliance in question. In their judgement at least, since faith precedes the application of water, the only means of union are possessed by the abettors of infant sprinkling equally with themselves; who are therefore equally of the "body of Christ, and members in particular." But since the Holy Ghost identifies that body with the church, explaining the one by the other, ("for his body's sake, which is the church,") it seems impossible to deny that they are fully entitled to be considered, in the catholic sense of the term, as members of the christian church. And as the universal church is nothing more than the collective body of the faithful, and differs only from a particular assembly of christians, as the whole from a part, it is equally impossible to deny that a pædobaptist society is, in the more limited import of the word, a true church.

If we consider the matter in a light somewhat different, we shall be conducted to the same conclusion, and be compelled to confess that pædobaptist societies are, or at least may be, notwithstanding the practice of infant-sprinkling, true churches. The idea of plurality, it will be admitted, adds nothing to the nature of the object to which it is attached. The idea of a number of men differs nothing in kind, from that of a single man, except that it involves a repetition, or multiplication of the same idea. But the term church is merely a numerical term, denoting a multitude, or an assembly of men; and for the same reason that a number of men meeting together constitute an assembly, or *church*,* in the most comprehensive import of the word, so a number of christians convened for the worship of God, constitutes a christian assembly, or a *church*. Such an assembly will necessarily be modified by the character of the members which compose it; if their sentiments are erroneous, the church will proportionably imbibe a tincture of error; but to affirm that though it consists of real christians, a society of such assembled for christian worship is not a true church, is to attribute to the idea of *plurality* or of *number* the power of changing the nature or essence of the object with which it is united, which involves a contradiction to our clearest perceptions. If we adhere to the dictates of reason or of scripture, when we give the appellation of a church to a particular society of christians, we shall mingle nothing in our conceptions, beyond what enters into our ideas of an individual christian, with the exception of this circumstance only, that it denotes a number of such individuals actually assembled, or wont to assemble for the celebration of divine worship. Though the definition of a church has often been the occasion of much confused disquisition, especially when the term has been applied exclusively to the clergy, the baptists, I believe are the only persons who have scrupled to assign that appellation to societies acknowledged to consist of sincere and spiritual worshippers: a notion

* Acts xix. 32.—"For the assembly was confused." The original is ἡ ἐκκλησία, the term usually rendered *church*.

which, however repugnant to the dictates of candour, or of common sense, is the necessary appendage of the practice, equally absurd, of confining their communion to their own denomination.

Having shown, we trust to the satisfaction of the reader, that pædobaptism is not an error of such magnitude, as to prevent the society which maintains it from being deemed a true church, I proceed to observe, that to repel the members of such a society from communion is the very essence of schism. Schism is a causeless and unnecessary separation from the church of Christ, or from any part of it; and that secession cannot urge the plea of necessity, where no concurrence in what is deemed evil, no approbation of error or superstition, is involved in communion. In the case before us, by admitting a pædobaptist to the Lord's supper, no sanction whatever is given to infant-sprinkling, no act of concurrence is involved or implied; nothing is done, or left undone, which would not have been equally so, if his attendance were withdrawn. Under such circumstances, the necessity of preserving the purity of worship, or of avoiding an active cooperation in what we deem sinful or erroneous (the only justifiable ground of separation), has no place. The objection to his admission is founded solely on a disapprobation of a particular practice, considered, not as it affects us, since no part of our religious practice is influenced by it, but in relation to its intrinsic demerits.

Division amongst christians, especially when it proceeds to a breach of communion, is so fraught with scandal, and so utterly repugnant to the genius of the gospel, that the suffrages of the whole christian world have concurred in regarding it as an evil, on no occasion to be incurred, but for the avoidance of a greater—the violation of conscience. Whenever it becomes impossible to continue in a religious community without concurring in practices, and sanctioning abuses, which the word of God condemns, a secession is justified by the apocalyptic voice, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her

plagues."* On this principle, the conduct of the reformers, in separating from the Roman hierarchy, admits of an ample vindication: in consequence of the introduction of superstitious rites and ceremonies, it became impracticable to continue in her communion without partaking of her sins; and for a similar reason the nonconformists seceded from the church of England, where ceremonies were enforced, and an ecclesiastical polity established, incompatible, as they conceived, with the purity and simplicity of the christian institute. In each of these cases, the blame of schism did not attach to the separatists, but to that spirit of imposition which rendered separation requisite. In each instance, it was an act of self-preservation, rendered unavoidable by the highest necessity, that of declining to concur in practices at which their conscience revolted. But what similarity to this is discernible in the conduct of the advocates of strict communion? They are not engaged in preserving their own liberty, but in an attack on the liberty of others: their object is not to preserve the worship in which they join, pure from contamination; but to sit in judgement on the consciences of their brethren, and to deny them the privileges of the visible church on account of a difference of opinion, which is neither imposed on themselves, nor deemed fundamental. They propose to build a church, upon the principle of an absolute exclusion of a multitude of societies, which they must either acknowledge to be true churches, or be convicted, as we have seen, of the greatest absurdity; while, for a conduct so monstrous and unnatural, they are precluded from the plea of necessity, because no attempt is made by pædobaptists to modify their worship, or to control the most enlarged exercise of private judgement. Upon the principle for which I am contending, they are not called to renounce their peculiar tenets on the subject of baptism, nor to express their approbation of a contrary practice; but simply not to sever themselves from the body of Christ, nor refuse to unite with his church.

* Rev. xviii. 4.

However familiar the spectacle of christian societies who have no fellowship or intercourse with each other has become, he who consults the New Testament will instantly perceive, that nothing more repugnant to the dictates of inspiration, or to the practice of the first and purest ages, can be conceived. When we turn our eyes to the primitive times, we behold one church of Christ, and one only, in which, when new assemblies of christians arose, they were considered not as multiplying, but diffusing it; not as destroying its unity, or impairing its harmony, but being fitly compacted together on the same foundation, as a mere accession to the beauty and grandeur of the whole. The spouse of Christ, like a prolific mother, exulted in her numerous offspring, who were all equally cherished in her bosom, and grew up at her side. As the necessity of departing from these maxims, or of appearing to depart from them at least, by forming separate societies, arose entirely from that spirit of ecclesiastical tyranny and superstition which was gradually developed, so a similar measure is justifiable as far as that necessity extends, and no farther. In the case of strict communion, it has no place whatever. In that case, it is not a defensive, but an offensive measure; it is not an assertion of christian liberty, by resisting encroachment,—it is itself a violent encroachment on the freedom of others; not an effort to preserve our own worship pure, but to enforce a conformity to our views, in a point acknowledged not essential to salvation. That the unity of the church cannot be maintained upon those principles, that if every error is to be opposed, not by mild remonstrance and scriptural argument, but by making it the pretext of a breach of communion, nothing but a series of animosities and divisions can ensue, the experience of past ages has rendered sufficiently evident. If amidst the infinite diversity of opinions, each society deems it necessary to render its own peculiarities the basis of union, as though the design of christians in forming themselves into a church, were not to exhibit the great principles of the gospel, but to give publicity and effect to party distinc-

tions, all hope of restoring christian harmony and unanimity must be abandoned. When churches are thus constituted, instead of enlarging the sphere of christian charity, they become so many hostile confederacies.

If it be once admitted, that a body of men associating for christian worship have a right to enact, as terms of communion, something more than is included in the terms of salvation, the question suggested by St. Paul—"Is Christ divided?"* is utterly futile: what he considered as a solecism is reduced to practice, and established by law. How is it possible to attain or preserve unanimity in the absence of an intelligible standard? and when we feel ourselves at liberty to depart from a divine precedent, and to affect a greater nicety and scrupulosity in the separation of the precious and the vile, than the Searcher of hearts; when we follow the guidance of private partialities and predilections, without pretending to regulate our conduct by the pattern of our great Master; who can be at a loss to perceive the absolute impossibility of preserving "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?" Of what is essential to salvation, it is not difficult to judge; the quiet of the conscience requires that the information on this subject should be clear and precise: whatever is beyond, is involved in comparative obscurity, and subject to doubtful disputation.

There are certain propositions which produce on a mind free from prejudice such instantaneous conviction, as scarcely to admit of formal proof. Of this nature is the following position, that it is presumptuous to aspire to a greater purity and strictness in selecting the materials of a church, than are observed by its Divine Founder; and that those whom he forms and actuates by his Spirit, and admits to communion with himself, are sufficiently qualified for the communion of mortals. What can be alleged in contradiction to a truth so indubitable and so obvious? Nothing but a futile distinction (futile in relation to the present subject) betwixt the moral and the positive parts of christianity. We are told, again

* 1 Cor. i. 13.

and again, that the Lord's supper is a positive and arbitrary institution, in consequence of which, the right to it is not to be judged of by moral considerations and general reasonings, but by express prescription and command.

Willing to meet objectors on their own ground, we request them to point us to the passage in the code of inspiration, where unbaptized christians are forbidden to participate; and all the answer we receive, consists merely of those inferences and arguments from analogy, against which they protest; so that our opponents, unsupported by the letter of scripture, are obliged to have recourse to general reasoning, not less than ourselves, however lame and defective that reasoning may be.

When we urge upon them the fact that all genuine christians are received by Christ, and that his conduct in this instance is proposed as a pattern for our imitation, they are compelled to shift their ground; and although it is evident to every one who reflects, that we mean to assert the obligation of adhering to that example, only as far as it is known, they adduce the instance of immoral professors, who, though received, as they contend, by Christ, are justly rejected by the church. But how, we ask, are we to ascertain the fact that such persons are accepted of Christ, till they give proof of their repentance? Is it precisely the same thing to neglect a known rule of action, as to cease to follow it when it is involved in hopeless obscurity? Admitting, for argument's sake, that they who live disorderly have uninterrupted union with the Saviour, it is impossible that we should know it while they continue impenitent; and therefore, on such occasions, it ceases to be a rule. But in rejecting pædobaptists in the mass, they reject a numerous class of christians whom they know and acknowledge to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. If the two cases are parallel, we acknowledge the justness of the conclusion; if not, what more futile and absurd? Let it be remembered, however, that all this quibbling and tergiversation are employed to get rid of an apostolic canon, and that they bear upon our principles in no other sense than as they tend to nullify or impair the force of an inspired

maxim. If we are in error, we deem it no small felicity to err in such company.

Before I close this section, I must be permitted to remark an inconsistency in the conduct of our opponents, connected with this part of the subject, which has often excited my surprise. Disclaiming, as they do, all communion with pædobaptists, and refusing to acknowledge them as a legitimate part of the christian church, we should naturally expect they would shun every approach to such a recognition of them with peculiar care in devotional exercises, in solemn addresses to the Deity. Nothing, on the contrary, is more common than the interchange of religious services betwixt baptists and independents, in which the pædobaptist minister is solemnly commended to the Supreme Being as the pastor of the church, and his blessing earnestly implored on the relation they stand in to each other; nor is it unusual for a baptist to officiate at the ordination of an independent minister, by delivering a charge, or inculcating the duties of the people, in a discourse appropriated to the occasion. They feel no objection to have communion with pædobaptists in prayer and praise, the most solemn of all acts of worship, even on an occasion immediately connected with the recognition of a religious society; but no sooner does the idea of the eucharist occur, than it operates like a spell, and all this language is changed, and these sentiments vanish. It is surely amusing to behold a person solemnly inculcating the reciprocal duties of a relation, which, on his principles, has no existence; and interceding expressly in behalf of a pastor and a church, when, if we credit his representations at other times, that church is illegitimate, and the title of pastor consequently a mere usurpation. Although it must be acknowledged that the approach of pædobaptists to the sacred table is, on their principles, a presumptuous intrusion, it is seldom that the advocates of strict communion feel any scruple in attempting, by devotional exercises, to prepare the mind for the right performance of what they are accustomed to stigmatize as radically wrong. For my part, I am utterly at a loss to reconcile

these discrepancies. Is it that they consider less attention to truth, a less exact correspondence betwixt the language and the sentiments, requisite in addressing the Deity, than in discoursing with their fellow-mortals? Or is it not more candid to suppose, that devotion elevates them to a higher region, where they breathe the freer air, and look down upon the petty subtleties of a thorny, disputatious theology, with a just and sovereign contempt?

Section IV.

The Exclusion of Pædobaptists from the Lord's Table considered as a Punishment.

The refusal of the eucharist to a professor of christianity can be justified only on the ground of his supposed criminality; of his embracing heretical sentiments, or living a vicious life. As the sentence of exclusion is the severest the church can inflict, and as no punishment is just but in proportion to the degree of preceding delinquency, it follows of course, that he who incurs the total privation of church privileges, must be considered eminently in the light of an offender. When the incestuous person was separated from the church at Corinth, it was regarded by St. Paul as a *punishment*, and that of no ordinary magnitude:—"Sufficient," said he, "is this punishment, which was inflicted of many." Nor is there any difference, with respect to the present inquiry, betwixt the refusal of a candidate and the expulsion of a member; since nothing will justify the former of these measures, which might not be equally alleged in vindication of the latter. Both amount to a declaration of the parties being unworthy to communicate. The language held by our opponents is sufficiently decisive on this head:—"It is not every one," says Mr. Booth, "that is received of Jesus Christ, who is entitled to communion at his table; but such, and such only, as revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, and obey the laws of

his house."* Hence, to be consistent with themselves, they must impute to pædobaptists universally, a degree of delinquency equal to that which attaches to the most flagrant breaches of morality; and deem them equally guilty, in the sight of God, with those unjust persons, idolaters, revellers, and extortioners, who are declared incapable of entering into the kingdom of heaven. For, if the guilt imputed in this instance, is acknowledged to be of a totally different order from that which belongs to the openly vicious and profane, how come they to be included in the same sentence? and where is the equity of animadverting upon unequal faults with equal severity?

To be consistent, also, they must invariably refuse to tolerate every species of imperfection in their members, which in their judgement is equally criminal with the pædobaptist error: but how far they are from maintaining this impartiality, is too obvious to admit of a question. In churches whose discipline is the most rigid, it will not be denied that many are tolerated, who are chargeable with conduct more offensive in the sight of God than a misconception of the nature of a positive institute; nor will they assert that a Brainerd, a Doddridge, or a Leighton, had more to answer for at the supreme tribunal, on the score of infant baptism, than the most doubtful of those imperfect christians, whom they retain without scruple in their communion. Let them remember, too, that this reasoning proceeds, not on the principle of the innocence of error in general, or of infant sprinkling in particular; but, on the contrary, that it takes for granted, that some degree of blame attaches to a neglect, though involuntary, of a positive precept; we wish only to be informed, on what principle of equity it is proposed, in the infliction of ecclesiastical censures, to equalize things which are not equal.

From these injunctions of St. Paul which have already been distinctly noticed, where he enforces the duty of reciprocal toleration, we find him insisting on certain circumstances, adapted to diminish the moral estimate of

* Apology, p. 107.

the errors in question, and to show that they involved a very inconsiderable portion of blame, compared to that which the zealots, on either side, were disposed to impute. Such is the statement of their not being fundamental, of the possibility of their being held with a pure conscience, and the certainty that both parties were equally comprehended within the terms of salvation. In thus attempting to form an estimate of the magnitude of the mistakes and misconceptions of our fellow-christians, in a moral view, for the purpose of regulating our treatment of them, we are justified by the highest authority; and the only rational inquiry seems to be, whether infant baptism is really more criminal than those acknowledged imperfections which are allowed to be proper objects of christian forbearance. If it be affirmed that it is, we request our opponents to reconcile this assertion with the high encomiums they are wont to bestow on pædobaptists, many of whom they feel no hesitation in classing, on other occasions, with the most eminent saints upon earth. That they are perfectly exempt from blame, we are not contending; but this strange combination of vice and virtue in the same persons, by which they are, at once, justly excluded from the church as *criminal*, and extolled as saints, is perfectly incomprehensible. The advocates of this doctrine attempt to conceal its deformity, by employing an attenuated and ambiguous phraseology, and instead of speaking of pædobaptists in the terms their system demands, are fond of applying the epithets irregular, disorderly, &c., to their conduct. Still the question returns —Is this imputed irregularity innocent or criminal? If the former, why punish it at all? If the latter, surely the punishment should be proportionate to the guilt; and if it exceed the measure awarded to offences equally aggravated, we must either pronounce it unjust, or confound the distinction of right and wrong. But if the forfeiture of all the privileges attached to christian society, is incurred merely by infant baptism, while numerous imperfections, both in sentiment and practice, are tolerated in the same church, it cannot be denied that the former is treated with more severity than the latter. If it be

more criminal, such treatment is just; but if a Doddridge and a Leighton were not, even in the judgement of our opponents, necessarily more criminal in the sight of God than the most imperfect of those whom they retain in their communion, it is neither just in itself, nor upon their own principles.

If we consider the matter in another light, the measure under consideration will appear equally incapable of vindication. As it is unquestionably of the nature of *punishment*, so the infliction of every species of punishment is out of place, which has no tendency to reform the offender, or to benefit others by his example, which are its only legitimate ends. Whatever is beside these purposes, is a useless waste of suffering, equally condemned by the dictates of reason and religion. The application of this principle to the case before us, is extremely obvious.

I am far from thinking lightly of the spiritual power with which Christ has armed his church. It is a high and mysterious one, which has no parallel on earth. Nothing in the order of means is equally adapted to awaken compunction in the guilty, with spiritual censures impartially administered. The sentence of excommunication, in particular, harmonizing with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible; it is the voice of God, speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises or neglects, ranks with "heathen men and publicans," joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world, doomed to perdition. Excommunication is a sword which strong in its apparent weakness, and the sharper and more efficacious for being divested of all sensible and exterior envelopements, lights immediately on the spirit, and inflicts a wound which no balm can cure, no ointment can mollify, but which must continue to ulcerate and burn, till it is healed by the blood of atonement, applied by penitence and prayer. In no instance is that axiom more fully verified, "The weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men," than in the discipline of his church. By in

cumbering it with foreign aid, they have robbed it of its real strength; by calling in the aid of temporal pains and penalties, they have removed it from the spirit to the flesh, from its contact with eternity to unite it to secular interests; and, as the corruption of the best things is the worst, have rendered it the scandal and reproach of our holy religion.

While it retains its character, as a spiritual ordinance, it is the chief bulwark against the disorders which threaten to overturn religion, the very nerve of virtue, and, next to the preaching of the cross, the principal antidote to the "corruptions that are in the world through lust." Discipline in a church occupies the place of laws in a state; and as a kingdom, however excellent its constitution, will inevitably sink into a state of extreme wretchedness, in which laws are either not enacted, or not duly administered; so a church, which pays no attention to discipline, will either fall into confusion, or into a state so much worse, that little or nothing will remain worth regulating. The right of inflicting censures, and of proceeding in extreme cases to excommunication, is an essential branch of that power with which the church is endowed, and bears the same relation to discipline that the administration of criminal justice bears to the general principles of government. When this right is exerted in upholding the "faith once delivered to the saints," or enforcing a conscientious regard to the laws of Christ, it maintains its proper place, and is highly beneficial. Its cognizance of doctrine is justified by apostolic authority; "a heretic, after two or three admonitions, reject:" nor is it to any purpose to urge the difference betwixt ancient heretics and modern, or that to pretend to distinguish truth from error is a practical assumption of infallibility. While the truth of the gospel remains, a fundamental contradiction to it is possible;—and the difficulty of determining what is so, must be exactly proportioned to the difficulty of ascertaining the import of revelation, which he who affirms to be insurmountable, ascribes to it such an obscurity as must defeat its primary purpose.

He who contends that no agreement in doctrine is essential to communion, must, if he understands himself, either mean to assert that christianity contains no fundamental truths, or that it is not necessary that a member of a church should be a christian. The first of these positions sets aside the necessity of faith altogether; the last is a contradiction in terms. For these reasons, it is required that the operation of discipline should extend to speculative errors, no less than to practical enormities. But since it is not pretended that pædobaptists are heretics, it is evident that they are not subject to the cognizance of the church, under that character. As they differ from us merely in the interpretation of a particular precept, while they avow the same deference to the legislator, the proper antidote to their error is calm, dispassionate argument, not the exercise of power. Let us present the evidence on which our practice is grounded, to the greatest advantage, to which the display of a conciliating spirit will contribute more than a little: but to proceed with a high hand, and attempt to terminate the dispute by authority, involves an utter misconception of the true nature and object of discipline, which is never to decide what is doubtful, to elucidate what is obscure, but to promulgate the sentence which the immutable laws of Christ have provided, with the design, in the first place, of exciting compunction in the breast of the offender, and next of profiting others by his example. The solemn decision of a christian assembly, that an individual has forfeited his right to spiritual privileges, and is henceforth consigned to the kingdom of Satan, is an awful proceeding, only inferior in terror to the sentence of the last day.

But what is it which renders it so formidable? It is its accordance with the moral nature of man, its harmony with the dictates of conscience, which gives it all its force. When, on the contrary, the pious inquirer is satisfied with his own conduct, viewing it with approbation and complacency; when he is fortified, as in the present instance, by the example of a great majority of the christian world, who are ready to receive him with

open arms, and to applaud him for the very practice which has provoked it, how vain is it to expect that his exclusion from a particular church will operate a change! When he learns, too, that his supposed error is not pretended to be fatal, but such as may be held with a good conscience, and with faith unfeigned, and is actually held by some of the best of men, it is easy to foresee what sentiments he will feel towards the authors of such a measure, and how little he will be prepared to examine impartially the evidence of that particular opinion which has occasioned it. Such a proceeding, not having the remotest tendency to inform, or to alarm the conscience, is ineffectual to every purpose of discipline; and as it professedly comprises nothing of the nature of argument, no light can be derived from it, towards the elucidation of a controverted question. It interposes by authority, instead of reason, where authority can avail nothing, and reason is all in all: and while it is contemptible as an instrument employed to compel unanimity, its power of exciting prejudice and disgust is unrivalled. Such are the mischiefs resulting from confounding together the provinces of discipline and of argument; and since the practice which we have ventured to oppose, if it have any meaning, is intended to operate as a punishment, without answering one of the ends for which it is inflicted, it is high time it were consigned to oblivion.

There is another consideration, sufficiently related to the part of the subject before us to justify my introducing it here, as I would wish to avoid the unnecessary multiplication of divisions. Whatever criminality attaches to the practice of free communion, must entirely consist in *sanctioning* the improper conduct of the parties with whom we unite; and if it be wrong to join with pædobaptists at the Lord's table, it must be still more so in them to celebrate it. When an action allowed in itself to be innocent or commendable, becomes improper, as performed in conjunction with another, that impropriety must result solely from the moral incompetence, to that action, of the party associated. Thus in the instance before us, it must be assumed that pædobaptists are

morally culpable in approaching the sacred symbols, or the attempt to criminate us for *sanctioning* them in that practice would be ridiculous. As it is allowed that every baptized believer not only may partake, but ought to partake, of that spiritual repast, his uniting with pædobaptists on that occasion, is liable to objection on no other ground than that it may be considered as intimating his approbation of *their* conduct in that particular. Upon the principles of our opponents, their approach is not only sinful, but sinful to such a degree as to communicate a moral taint to what, in other circumstances, would be deemed an act of obedience. Here the first question that arises is,—Are the advocates of infant baptism criminal in approaching the Lord's table?

Be it remembered, that our controversy with them respects the ordinance of baptism only, which we suppose them to have misconceived, and that it has no relation to the only remaining positive institute. Believing, as many of them unquestionably do, that they are as truly baptized as ourselves, and there being no controversy betwixt us on the subject of the eucharist, it is impossible for them, even on the principles of our opponents, to entertain the least scruple respecting the obligation of attending to that ordinance. Admitting it possible for them to believe what they uniformly and invariably profess, they cannot fail of being fully convinced that it is their duty to communicate. Under these circumstances ought they to communicate, or ought they not? If we answer in the negative, we must affirm that men ought not to pursue that course which, after the most mature deliberation, the unhesitating dictates of conscience suggest; which would go to obliterate and annul the only immediate rule of human action. Nor can it be objected with truth, that the tendency of this reasoning is to destroy the absolute difference betwixt right and wrong, by referring all to conscience. That, apart from human judgements, there is an intrinsic moral difference in actions, we freely admit, and hence results the previous obligation of informing the mind, by a diligent attention to the dictates of reason and religion, and of delaying to act till we have

sufficient light; but in entire consistence with this, we affirm that, where there is no hesitation, the criterion of *immediate* duty is the suggestion of conscience, whatever guilt may have been previously incurred, by the neglect of serious and impartial inquiry. That this, under the modifications already specified, is the only criterion, is sufficiently evident from the impossibility of conceiving any other. If it lead (as it easily may, from the neglect of the previous inquiry already mentioned) to a deviation from absolute rectitude, we must not concur in the action in which such deviation is involved.

To apply these principles to the case before us. Whatever blame we may be disposed to attribute to the abettors of infant baptism, on the score of previous inattention, or prejudice; as there is nothing in their principles to cause them to hesitate respecting the obligation of the eucharist, it is unquestionably their *immediate* duty to celebrate it, they would be guilty of a deliberate and wilful offence were they to neglect it. And as it is *their* duty to act thus, in compliance with the dictates of conscience, we cannot be guilty of sanctioning what is evil in them, by the approbation implied in joint participation. As far as *they* are concerned, the case seems clear; and no sanction is given to criminal conduct. It remains to be considered only how the action is situated with respect to ourselves; and here the decision is still more easy, for the action to which we are invited is not only consistent with rectitude, but would be allowed by all parties to be an instance of obedience, but for the concurrence of pædobaptists. Thus much may suffice in answer to the first question, respecting the supposed criminality of the act of communion as performed by the advocates of infant baptism: a criminality which must be assumed as the sole basis of the charges adduced against the practice we are defending.

When we reflect that the whole of our opponents' reasoning turns upon the disqualification of pædobaptists for the Lord's supper, it is surprising that we rarely, if ever, find them contemplate the subject in that light, or advert to the criminality of breaking down that sacred

inclosure. The subordinate agents are severely censured, the principal offenders scarcely noticed; and if my reader be disposed to gratify his curiosity by making a collection of all the uncandid strictures which have been passed upon the advocates of pædobaptism, it is more than probable the charge of profaning the Lord's supper would not be found among the number. Yet this is the *original* sin; this the epidemic evil, as widely diffused as the existence of pædobaptist communities: and if it be of such a nature as to attach a portion of guilt to whatever comes into contact with it, it must, considering its extensive prevalence, be one of the most crying enormities. It is an evil which has spread much wider than the sacrifice of the mass; it is a pollution which (with the exception of one sect only) attaches to all flesh, and is unblushingly avowed by the professors of christianity in every part of the universe. And, what is most surprising, the only persons who have discovered it, instead of lifting up their voice, maintain a profound silence; and, while they are sufficiently liberal in their censures on the popular error respecting baptism, are not heard to breathe a murmur against this erroneous abuse. In truth they are so little impressed with it, that they decline urging it, even where the mention of it would seem unavoidable. When they are rebuking us for joining with our pædobaptist brethren in partaking of a sacrament for which they are supposed to want the due qualifications, it is not *their* presumption in approaching, on which they insist, as might be reasonably expected; on that subject they are silent, while they vehemently inveigh against the imaginary countenance we afford to the neglect of baptism. Thus they persist in construing our conduct, not into an approval of that act of communion in which we are engaged, but into a tacit admission of the validity of infant baptism, against which we are known to remonstrate. In short, they are disposed to attack our practice in any point, rather than in that in which, if we are wrong, it is alone vulnerable, that of its being an expression of our approbation of pædobaptists celebrating the eucharist. In the same spirit, when they have once procured the exclusion

of the obnoxious party from their assemblies, they are completely satisfied; their communion elsewhere gives them no concern, though it must be allowed, on the supposition of the pretended disqualification, that the evil remains in its full force. Nor are they ever known to remonstrate with them on this irregularity during its continuance; nor, should they afterwards become converts to our doctrine, to recall it to their attention, with a view to excite compunction and remorse; so that this is perhaps the only sin for which men are never called to repentance, and of which no man has been known to repent. When our Lord dismissed the woman taken in adultery, though he did not proceed to judge her, he solemnly charged her to *sin no more;* the advocates for strict communion, when they dismiss pædobaptists, give them no such charge; their language seems to be,—"Go, sin by yourselves, and we are satisfied."

The inference I would deduce from these remarkable facts is, that they possess an internal conviction that the class of christians whom they proscribe, would be guilty of a great impropriety in declining to communicate in the sacramental elements; and that the union of baptists with them in that solemnity, so far from being liable to the imputation of "partaking in other men's sins," is not only lawful, but commendable.

Section V.

On the Impossibility of reducing the Practice of Strict Communion to any general Principle.

When a particular branch of conduct is so circumstanced as to be incapable of being deduced from some general rule, or of being resolved into some comprehensive principle, founded on reason or revelation, we may be perfectly assured it is not obligatory. Whatever is matter of duty, is a part of some *whole*, the relation of which is susceptible of proof, either by the express deci-

sion of scripture, or by general reasoning; and a point of practice perfectly insulated, and disjointed from the general system of duties, whatever support it may derive from prejudice, custom, or caprice, can never be satisfactorily vindicated. From want of attention to this axiom, both the world and the church have, in different periods, been overrun with innumerable forms of superstition and folly; to which the only effectual antidote is, an appeal to principles. Unless I am much mistaken, the question under discussion will afford a striking exemplification of the justness of this remark. If it be found impossible to fix a medium betwixt the toleration of all opinions in religion, and the restriction of it to errors *not fundamental*, the practice of exclusive communion must be abandoned, because it is neither more nor less than an attempt to establish such a medium. By errors *not fundamental*, I mean such as are admitted to consist with a state of grace and salvation; such as are not supposed to prevent their abettors from being accepted of God. With such as contend for the indiscriminate admission of all doctrines on the one hand, or with the abettors of rigid uniformity, who allow no latitude of sentiment on the other, we have no concern; since we concur with our opponents in deprecating both these extremes; and while we are tenacious of the "truth as it is in Jesus," we both admit that some indulgence to the mistakes and imperfections of the truly pious is due, from a regard to the dictates of inspiration, and the nature of man. The only subject of controversy is, how far that forbearance is to be extended: we assert, to every diversity of judgement, not incompatible with salvation; they contend that a difference of opinion on baptism is an excepted case. If the word of God had clearly and unequivocally made this exception, we should feel ourselves bound to admit it, upon the same principle on which we maintain the infallible certainty of revelation; but when we press for this decision, and request to be directed to the part of scripture which for ever prohibits unbaptized persons from approaching the sacrament, in the same manner as the Jews were prohibited from celebrating the passover, who had not submitted to circumcision, we meet with no reply but precarious inferences and general reasoning.

However plausible their mode of arguing may appear, the impartial reader will easily perceive it fails in the main point, which is, to establish that *specific difference* betwixt the case they except out of their list of tolerated errors, and those which they admit, which shall justify this opposite treatment. Thus, when they ask whether God has not "commanded baptism; whether it is not the believer's duty to be found in it;"* it is manifest that the same reasons might be urged against bearing with any imperfection in our fellow-christian whatever; for which of these, we ask, is not inconsistent with some command, and a violation, in a greater or less degree, of some duty? with this difference, indeed, that many of the imperfections which christian churches are necessitated to bear with, are seated in the will, while the case before us involves merely an unintentional mistake. "It is not every one," says Mr. Booth, "that is received of Jesus Christ, who is entitled to communion at his table; but such, and only such, as revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, and obey the laws of his house." This is the most formal attempt which that writer has made to specify the difference betwixt the case of the abettors of infant baptism, and others; for which reason the reader will excuse my directing his attention to it for a few moments. We are indebted to him, in the first place, for a new discovery in theology. We should not have suspected, but for his assertion, that there could be a description of persons whom Christ has received, who neither revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, nor obey his laws. How Mr. Booth acquired this information we know not; but certainly in our Saviour's time it was otherwise, "Then are ye my disciples," said he, "if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." I congratulate the prudence evinced by the venerable author, in not publishing the names of those highly privileged individuals, who have proved their title to heaven to his satisfaction, without reverence, submission, or obedience;

* Booth's Apology, p. 128.

wishing his example had been imitated, in this particular, by the authors of the wonderful conversions of malefactors, many of whom, I fear, belong to this new sect.

This singular description, however, I scarcely need remind the reader, is designed to characterize baptists in opposition to pædobaptists; and were it not the production of a man whom I highly revere, I should comment upon it with the severity it deserves. Suffice it to remark, that to mistake the meaning of a statute is one thing, not to reverence the legislator, another; that he cannot submit with a good conscience to an ordinance, who is not apprised of its existence; and that a blind obedience, even to divine laws, would be far from constituting a reasonable service. Every conscientious adherent to infant baptism reveres the authority of Christ not less than a baptist, and is distinguished by a spirit of submission and obedience to every known part of his will; and as this is all to which a baptist can pretend, and far more than many who, without scruple, are tolerated in our churches, can boast, we are as far as ever from ascertaining the *specific difference* betwixt the case of the pædobaptist, and other instances of error supposed to be entitled to indulgence. In spite of Mr. Booth's marvellous definition, reverence, submission, and obedience, are such essential features in the character of a christian, that he who was judged to be destitute of them in their substance and reality would instantly forfeit that character; while to possess them in perfection is among the brightest acquisitions of eternity. It should be remembered, too, that the general principles of morality are not less the laws of Christ than positive rites, and, if we credit prophets and apostles, much to be preferred in comparison; so that it must be acknowledged that he who is deficient in attention to these, while he is more exemplary in discharging the former than a baptized christian, (a very frequent case,) stands higher in the scale of obedience. So equivocal is the line of separation here attempted.

When the necessity of tolerating imperfection is once

admitted, there remains no point at which it can consistently stop, till it is extended to every gradation of error, the habitual maintenance of which is compatible with a state of salvation. The reason is, that it is absolutely impossible to define that *species* of error which is so situated as not to preclude its possessor from divine acceptance, although it forfeits his title to the full exercise of christian charity. The baptists who contend for confining the Lord's supper to themselves, imagine they have found such an error in the practice of initiating infants into the christian church. But it is observable that they can reduce it to no *class*, nor define it by any *general idea:* and when we urge them, with the apostolic injunction, to bear with each other's infirmities, they have nothing to reply, but merely that St. Paul is not speaking of baptism, which is true, because one thing is not another; but it behoves them to show that the principle he establishes does not *include* this case, and here they are silent.

If we impartially examine the reasons on which we rest the toleration of any supposed error, we shall find they invariably coincide with the idea of its *not being fundamental.* If it be alleged, for example, that the error in question relates to a subject less clearly revealed than some others, what is this but to insinuate the ease with which an honest inquirer may mistake respecting it? If the little practical influence it is likely to exert, is alleged as a plea for forbearance, the force of such a remark rests entirely on the assumption of an indissoluble connexion betwixt a state of salvation and a certain character, which the opinion in question is supposed not to destroy. If we allege the example of eminently pious men, who have embraced it, we infer from analogy the actual safety of the person by whom it is held; and, in short, it is impossible to construct an argument for the exercise of mutual forbearance, but what proceeds upon this principle; a principle which pervades the reasoning of our opponents on every other occasion, except this of strict communion, which they make an insulated case, capriciously exempting it from the arbitration of all the

general rules of scripture, as well as from the maxims to which, in all other instances, they are attached.

Reluctant as I feel to trespass on the patience of the reader, by unnecessarily prolonging the discussion, I am anxious, if possible, to set the present argument in a still stronger light. I observe, therefore, that if it be contended that a certain opinion is so obnoxious as to justify the exclusion of its abettors from the privilege of christian fellowship, it must be either on account of its involving a contradiction to the saving truth of the gospel, or on account of its injurious effects on the character. As those of our brethren to whom this reasoning is addressed, positively disclaim considering infant baptism in the former light, they will not attempt to vindicate the exclusion of pædobaptists on that ground. In vindication of such a measure, they must allege the injurious effects it produces on the character of its abettors. Here, however, they have precluded themselves from the possibility of urging that the injury sustained is *fatal*, by the previous concession that it does not involve a contradiction to saving truth. Could they, without cancelling that concession, urge the *fatal* nature of the influence in question, they would present an object to the mind sufficiently precise and determinate; an object which may be easily conceived, and accurately defined. But, as things are now situated, they can, at most, only insist on such a kind and degree of deteriorating effect as is consistent with the spiritual safety of the party concerned; and as they are among the first to contend that every species of error is productive of injurious effects, it is incumbent upon them to point out some consequences worse in their kind, or more aggravated in degree, resulting from this particular *error*, than what may be fairly ascribed to the worst of those erroneous or defective views, which they are accustomed to tolerate. These injurious consequences must also occupy an intermediate place between two extremes; they must, on the one hand, be decidedly more serious than can be supposed to result from the most crude, undigested, or discordant views, tolerated in regular baptist churches, yet not of such a nature, on the

other, as to involve the danger of eternal perdition. Let them specify, if it be in their power, that ill influence on the character which is the natural consequence of the tenet of infant sprinkling, considered *per se*, or independent of adventitious circumstances, and the operation of accidental causes, which justifies a treatment of its patrons, so different from what is given to the abettors of other errors. This malignant influence must, I repeat it, be the natural or necessary product of the practice of pædobaptism; because the simple avowal of this is deemed sufficient to incur the forfeiture of church privileges, without further time or inquiry. However vehemently the supporters of such a measure may declaim against it, or however triumphantly expose the principles on which it is founded, they have done nothing towards accomplishing their object—the vindication of strict communion, since the same mode of proceeding might be adopted towards any other misconception or erroneous opinion; and if it may be forcibly expelled, as soon as it is confuted, there is an end of toleration. Toleration has no place but in the presence of acknowledged imperfection. It is absolutely necessary for them, as they would vindicate their conduct to the satisfaction of reasonable men, to prove that some specific deteriorating effect results from the practice of infant baptism, distinct from the malignant influence of error in general, and of those imperfections, in particular, which are not inconsistent with salvation.

Though the opposition betwixt truth and error is equal in all cases, and the former always susceptible of proof as well as the latter of confutation, all error is not opposed to the *same* truth; and hence arises a distinction betwixt such erroneous and imperfect views of religion as, however they may, in their remoter consequences, impair, do not contradict, the gospel testimony, and such as do. We lay this distinction as the basis of that forbearance towards the mistakes and imperfections of good men for which we plead; and, as the case of our pædobaptist brethren is clearly comprehended within that distinction, feel no scruple in admitting them to christian

fellowship. We are attached to that distinction because it is both scriptural and intelligible; while the hypothesis of the strict baptists, as they style themselves, is so replete with perplexity and confusion, that, for my part, I absolutely despair of comprehending it. It proceeds upon the supposition of a certain medium between two extremes, which they have not even attempted to fix; and as the necessary consequence of this, their reasoning, if we choose to term it such, floats and undulates in such a manner, that it is extremely difficult to grasp it. On the pernicious influence of error in general we entertain no doubt, but we demand, again and again, to have the precise injurious effect of infant sprinkling pointed out and evinced, which is more to be deprecated than the probable result of those acknowledged imperfections to which they extend their indulgence. This must surely be deemed a reasonable requisition, though it is one with which they have not hitherto thought fit to comply.

The operation of speculative error on the mind is one of the profoundest secrets in nature; and to determine the precise quantity of evil resulting from it in any given case, (except the single one of its involving a denial of fundamental truth,) transcends the capacity of human nature. We must, in order to form a correct judgement, be not only perfectly acquainted with the nature and tendency of the error in question, but also with the portion of attention it occupies, as well as the degree of zeal and attachment with which it is embraced. We must determine the force of the counteracting principles, and how far it bears an affinity to the predominant failings of him who maintains it; how far it coalesces with the weaker parts of his moral constitution. These particulars, however, it is next to impossible to explore, when the inquiry respects ourselves; how much more to establish a scale which shall mark, by just gradations, the malignant influence of erroneous conceptions on others! On the supposition of a formal denial of saving, essential, truth, we feel no difficulty; we may determine, without hesitation, on the testimony of God, that it incurs a forfeiture of

the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, among which the communion of saints holds a distinguished place. But such a supposition is foreign to the present inquiry.

Instead of losing ourselves in a labyrinth of metaphysical subtleties, our only safe guide is an appeal to facts; and here we find, from experience, that the sentiments of the pædobaptist may consist with the highest attainments of piety exhibited in modern times; with the most varied and elevated forms of moral grandeur, without impairing the zeal of missionaries, without impeding the march of confessors to their prisons, or of martyrs to the flames. We are willing to acknowledge these tenets have produced much mischief in communities and nations, who have confounded baptism with regeneration; but the mere belief of the title of infants to that ordinance, is a misconception respecting a positive institute, much less injurious than if it affected the vital parts of christianity. But, be it what it may, we contend that it is impossible, without a total disregard of truth and decency, to assert, that it is *intrinsically* and *essentially* more pernicious in its effects than the numerous errors and imperfections which the advocates of strict communion feel no scruple in tolerating in the best organized churches. It is but justice to add, that few or none have attempted to prove that it is so; but have satisfied themselves with a certain vague and loose declamation, better adapted to inflame prejudice, than to produce light or conviction.

In the government of the church, there is a choice of three modes of procedure, each consistent with itself, though not equally compatible with the dictates of reason or scripture. We may either open the doors to persons of all sentiments and persuasions who maintain the messiahship of Christ; or insist upon an absolute uniformity of belief; or limit the necessity of agreement to articles deemed fundamental, leaving subordinate points to the exercise of private judgement. The strict baptists have feigned to themselves a fourth, of which it is not less difficult to form a clear and consistent concep-

tion, than of a fourth dimension. They have pursued the clew by which other inquirers have been conducted, till they arrived at a certain point, when they refused to proceed a step farther, without being able to assign a single reason for stopping, which would not equally prove they had already proceeded too far. They have attempted an incongruous mixture of liberal principles with a particular act of intolerance; and these, like the iron and clay in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, will not mix. Hence all that want of coherence and system in their mode of reasoning, which might be expected in a defence not of a theory, so properly, as of a capricious sally of prejudice.

Before I close this part of the subject, I must just remark the sensible chagrin which the venerable Booth betrays at our insisting on the distinction betwixt fundamentals and non-fundamentals in religion, and the singular manner in which he attempts to evade its force. After observing that we are wont, in defence of our practice, to plead that the points at issue are not fundamental—"Not fundamental!" he indignantly exclaims, "not essential! But in what sense is submission to baptism not essential? To our justifying righteousness, our acceptance with God, or our interest in his favour? So is the Lord's supper, and so is *every part of our obedience.* They (the friends of open communion) will readily allow that an interest in the divine favour is not obtained by miserable sinners, but granted by the eternal Sovereign: and that acceptance with the High and Holy God is not on conditions performed by us, but in consideration of the vicarious obedience, and propitiatory sufferings of the great Emanuel."

"To the pure, all things are pure." In the mind of Mr. Booth, nothing was associated with this language, I am persuaded, but impressions of piety and devotion: though its unguarded texture and ambiguous tendency are too manifest. For my own part, I am at a loss to put any other construction upon it than this; either that faith and repentance are in no respect conditions of salvation, or that adult baptism is of equal necessity and

importance. When it is asked—What is essential to salvation? the gospel constitution is presupposed, the great facts in christianity assumed; and the true import of the inquiry is—What is essential to a personal interest in the blessings secured by the former, in the felicity of which the latter are the basis? in which light, to reply—The atonement and righteousness of Christ, is egregious trifling, because being things *out of ourselves*, though the only preliminary basis of human hope, it is absurd to confound them with the characteristic difference betwixt such as are saved, and such as perish. When, in like manner, an inquiry arises—What is fundamental in religion? as we must be supposed by religion to intend a system of doctrines to be believed, and of duties to be performed, to direct us to the vicarious obedience of Christ, not as a necessary object of belief, but as a transaction absolute and complete in itself, and to pass over in silence the inherent distinction of character, the faith with its renovating influence to which the promise of life is attached, is, to speak in the mildest terms, to reply in a manner quite irrelevant; and when to this is joined, even by implication, a denial of the existence of such a distinction, we are conducted to the brink of a precipice. The denial of this is the very core of antinomianism, to which it is painful to see so able a writer, and so excellent a man as Mr. Booth, make the slightest approach. We would seriously ask whether it be intended to deny that the belief of any doctrines, or the infusion of any principles or dispositions whatever, is essential to future happiness; if this be intended, it supersedes the use and necessity of every branch of internal religion. If it is not, we ask, Are correct views on the subject of baptism to be classed among those doctrines?

Had we been contending for an indulgence towards such as are convinced of the obligation of believers' baptism, but refuse to act up to their convictions, and shrink from the cross, some parts of the expostulation we have quoted might be considered as pertinent; but to attempt to explain away a distinction, the most important in the-

ology, the only centre of harmony, the only basis of peace and concord, and the grand bulwark opposed to the sophistry of the church of Rome, is a humiliating instance of the temerity and imprudence incident to the best of men. The Jesuit Twiss, in that controversy with the protestants which gave occasion to the inimitable defence of their principles by the immortal Chillingworth, betrayed the same impatience with our author at this distinction, though in perfect consistence with the doctrines of a church which pretends, by an appeal to an infallible tribunal, to decide every controversy, and to preclude every doubt.

Nothing but an absolute despair of giving a satisfactory reply to the arguments drawn from this quarter, could have tempted Mr. Booth to quarrel with a distinction so justly dear to all protestants; and it is no small presumption of the justness of our sentiments, that the attempt to refute them is found to require that subversion of the most received axioms in theology, together with the strange paradox, that while much more than we suppose is necessary to communion, nothing is essential to salvation. In consideration, however, of the embarrassment of our opponents, we feel it easy to overlook the effusions of their discontent; but as it is not usual to consult the enemy on the choice of weapons, we shall continue to employ such as we find most efficacious, though they may not be the most pleasant to the touch.

Section VI.

The Impolicy of the Practice of Strict Communion considered.

In the affairs of religion and morality, where a divine authority is interposed, the first and chief attention is due to its dictates, which we are not permitted to violate in the least instance, though we proposed, by such violation, to promote the interests of religion itself. She

scorns to be indebted, even for conquest, to a foreign force: "the weapons of her warfare are not carnal." We have, on this account, carefully abstained from urging the imprudence of the measure we have ventured to propose, from an apprehension that we might be suspected of attempting to bias the suffrage of our readers, by considerations and motives disproportioned to the majesty of revealed truth. But having, as I trust, sufficiently shown that the practice of strict communion derives no support from that quarter, the way is open for the introduction of a few remarks on the natural tendency and effect of the two opposite systems. I would just premise that I hope no offence will be given to pædobaptists, by denominating their sentiments on the subject of baptism *erroneous*, as though it were expected that our assertion should be accepted for proof. It is designed as a simple statement of my opinion, and is assumed as the basis of my reasoning with my stricter brethren.

Truth and error, as they are essentially opposite in their nature, so the causes to which they are indebted for their perpetuity and triumph are not less so. Whatever retards a spirit of inquiry, is favourable to error; whatever promotes it, to truth. But nothing, it will be acknowledged, has a greater tendency to obstruct the exercise of free inquiry, than the spirit and feeling of a party. Let a doctrine, however erroneous, become a party distinction, and it is at once intrenched in interests and attachments which make it extremely difficult for the most powerful artillery of reason to dislodge it. It becomes a point of honour in the leaders of such parties, which is from thence communicated to their followers, to defend and support their respective peculiarities to the last; and, as a natural consequence, to shut their ears against all the pleas and remonstrances by which they are assailed. Even the wisest and best of men are seldom aware how much they are susceptible of this sort of influence; and while the offer of a world would be insufficient to engage them to recant a known truth, or to subscribe an acknowledged error, they are often retained in a willing captivity to prejudices and opinions

which have no other support, and which, if they could lose sight of party feelings, they would almost instantly abandon. To what other cause can we ascribe the attachment of Fenelon and of Pascal, men of exalted genius and undoubted piety, to the doctrine of transubstantiation, and other innumerable absurdities of the church of Rome? It is this alone which has ensured a sort of immortality to those hideous productions of the human mind, the shapeless abortions of night and darkness, which reason, left to itself, would have crushed in the moment of their birth.

It is observable that scientific truths make their way in the world with much more ease and rapidity than religious. No sooner is a philosophical opinion promulgated, than it undergoes at first a severe and rigorous scrutiny; and if it is found to coincide with the results of experiment, it is speedily adopted, and quietly takes its place among the improvements of the age. Every acquisition of this kind is considered as a common property; as an accession to the general stores of mental opulence. Thus the knowledge of nature, the further it advances from its head, not only enlarges its channel, by the accession of tributary streams, but gradually purifies itself from the mixture of error. If we search for the reason of the facility with which scientific improvements established themselves in preference to religious, we shall find it in the absence of combination, in there being no class of men closely united who have an interest, real or imaginary, in obstructing their progress. We hear, it is true, of parties in the republic of letters; but if such language is not to be considered as entirely allusive and metaphorical, the ties which unite them are so slight and feeble, compared to those which attach to religious societies, as scarcely to deserve the name. The spirit of party was much more sensibly felt in the ancient schools of philosophy than in the modern, on account of philosophical inquiries embracing a class of subjects which are now considered as no longer belonging to its province. Before revelation appeared, whatever is most deeply interesting in the contemplation of God, of man,

or of a future state, fell under the cognizance of philosophy; and hence it was cultivated with no inconsiderable portion of that moral sensibility, that solicitude and alternation of hope and fear, respecting an invisible state, which are now absorbed by the gospel. From that time the departments of theology and philosophy have become totally distinct, and the genius of the former free and unfettered.

In religious inquiries, few feel themselves at liberty to follow without restraint, the light of evidence, and the guidance of truth, in consequence of some previous engagement with a party; and, though the attachment to it might originally be purely voluntary, and still continues such, the natural love of consistency, the fear of shame, together with other motives sufficiently obvious, powerfully contribute to perpetuate and confirm it. When an attachment to the fundamental truths of religion is the basis of the alliance, the steadiness, constancy, and perseverance it produces, are of the utmost advantage; and hence we admire the wisdom of Christ in employing and consecrating the social nature of man in the formation of a church. It is utterly impossible to calculate the benefits of the publicity and support which christianity derives from that source; nor will it be doubted that the intrepidity evinced in confessing the most obnoxious truths, and enduring all the indignities and sufferings which result from their promulgation, is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to the same cause. The concentration of the wills and efforts of christians rendered the church a powerful antagonist to the world. But when the christian profession became split and divided into separate communities, each of which along with certain fundamental truths, retained a portion of error, its reformation became difficult just in proportion to the strength of these combinations. Religious parties imply a tacit compact not merely to sustain the fundamental truths of revelation, (which was the original design of the constitution of a church,) but also to uphold the incidental peculiarities by which they are distinguished. They are so many ramparts or fortifications, erected in order to give a secu-

rity and support to certain systems of doctrine and discipline, beyond what they derive from their native force and evidence.

The difficulty of reforming the corruptions of christianity is great, in a state of things where the fear of being eclipsed, and the anxiety in each denomination to extend itself as much as possible, engage, in spite of the personal piety of its members, all the solicitude and ardour which are not immediately devoted to the most essential truths; where correct conceptions on subordinate subjects are scarcely aimed at, but the particular views which the party has adopted, are either objects of indolent acquiescence, or zealous attachment. In such a state, opinions are no otherwise regarded, than as they affect the interest of a party; whatever conduces to augment its members, or its credit, must be supported at all events; whatever is of a contrary tendency, discountenanced and suppressed. How often do we find much zeal expended in the defence of sentiments, recommended neither by their evidence nor their importance, which, could their incorporation with an established creed be forgotten, would be quietly consigned to oblivion. Thus the waters of life, instead of that unobstructed circulation which would diffuse health, fertility, and beauty, are diverted from their channels, and drawn into pools and reservoirs, where, from their stagnant state, they acquire feculence and pollution.

The inference we would deduce from these facts is, that if we wish to revive an exploded truth, or to restore an obsolete practice, it is of the greatest moment to present it to the public in a manner least likely to produce the collision of party. But this may appear equivalent to saying, in other words, that it ought not to be made the basis of a sect; for the prejudices of party are always reciprocal, and in no instance is that great law of motion more applicable, that "re-action is always equal to action, and contrary thereto." While it is maintained as a private opinion, by which I mean one not characteristic of a sect, it stands upon its proper merits, mingles with facility in different societies, and in proportion to its evidence, and the attention it excites, insinuates itself like leaven, till the whole is leavened.

Such, it should seem, was the conduct of the baptists before the time of Luther. It appears, from the testimony of ecclesiastical historians, that their sentiments prevailed to a considerable extent among the Waldenses and Albigenses, the precursors of the Reformation, to whom the crime of anabaptism is frequently ascribed amongst other heresies: it is probable, however, that it did not prevail universally; nor is there the smallest trace to be discovered of its being made a term of communion. When the same opinions on this subject were publicly revived in the sixteenth century, under the most unfavourable auspices, and allied with turbulence, anarchy, and blood, no wonder they met with an unwelcome reception, and that, contemplated through such a medium, they incurred the reprobation of the wise and good. Whether the English baptists held at first any part of the wild and seditious sentiments of the German fanatics, it is difficult to say: supposing they did, (of which I am not aware there is the smallest evidence,) it is certain they soon abandoned them, and adopted the same system of religion with other nonconformists, except on the article of baptism. But it is much to be lamented that they continued to insist on that article as a term of communion, by which they excited the resentment of other denominations, and facilitated the means of confounding them with the German anabaptists, with whom they possessed nothing in common besides an opinion on one particular rite. One feature of resemblance, however, joined to an identity of name, was sufficient to surmount, in the public feeling, the impression of all the points of discrepancy or of contrast, and to subject them to a portion of the infamy attached to the ferocious insurgents of Munster. From that period, the success of the baptist sentiments became identified with the growth of a sect, which, rising under the most unfavourable auspices, was entirely destitute of the resources of worldly influence, and the means of popular attraction; and an opinion which, by its native simplicity and

evidence, is entitled to command the suffrages of the world, was pent up and confined within the narrow precincts of a party, where it laboured under an insupportable weight of prejudice. It was seldom examined by an impartial appeal to the sacred oracles, or regarded in any other light than as the whimsical appendage of a sect, who disgraced themselves at the outset by the most criminal excesses, and were at no subsequent period sufficiently distinguished by talents or numbers to command general attention.

Nothing is more common than for zeal to overshoot its mark. If a determined enemy of the baptists had been consulted on the most effectual method of rendering their principles unpopular, there is little doubt but that he would have recommended the very measures we have pursued: the first and most obvious effect of which has been to generate an inconceivable mass of prejudice in other denominations. To proclaim to the world our determination to treat "as heathen men and publicans," all who are not immediately prepared to concur with our views of baptism, what is it less than the language of hostility and defiance; admirably adapted to discredit the party which exhibits, and the principles which have occasioned such a conduct? By thus investing these principles with an importance which does not belong to them, by making them co-extensive with the existence of a church, they have indisposed men to listen to the evidence by which they are supported; and attempting to establish by authority the unanimity which should be the fruit of conviction, have deprived themselves of the most effectual means of producing it. To say that such a mode of proceeding is not adapted to convince, that refusing pædobaptists the right of communion has no tendency to produce a change of views, is to employ most inadequate language: it has a powerful tendency to the contrary; it can scarcely fail to produce impressions most unfavourable to the system with which it is connected, impressions which the gentlest minds find it difficult to distinguish from the effects of insult and degradation.

It is not, however, merely by this sort of re-action, that prejudice is excited unfavourable to the extension of our principles; but by the instinctive feelings of self-defence. Upon the system of strict communion, the moment a member of a pædobaptist church becomes convinced of the invalidity of his infant baptism, he must deem it obligatory upon him to relinquish his station, and dissolve his connexion with the church; and as superiority of ministerial talents and character is a mere matter of preference, but duty a matter of necessity, he must at all events connect himself with a baptist congregation, whatever sacrifice it may cost him, whatever loss he may incur. Though his pastor should possess the profundity and unction of an Edwards, or the eloquence of a Spencer, he must quit him for the most superficial declaimer, rather than be guilty of spiritual fornication. How is it possible for principles fraught with such a corollary, not to be contemplated with anxiety by our pædobaptist brethren, who, however they might be disposed to exercise candour towards our sentiments, considered in themselves, cannot fail to perceive the most disorganizing tendency in this their usual appendage. Viewed in such a connexion, their prevalence is a blow at the very root of pædobaptist societies, since, the moment we succeed in making a convert, we disqualify him for continuing a member. We deposit a seed of alienation and discord, which threatens their dissolution, so that we need not be surprised if other denominations should be tempted to compare us to the Euphratean horsemen in the Apocalypse, who are described as "having tails like scorpions, and with them they did hurt."

To these causes we must undoubtedly impute the superior degree of prejudice displayed by that class of christians, to whom we make the nearest approach, compared to such as are separated from us by a wider interval. A disposition to fair and liberal concession on the points at issue, is almost confined to the members of the established churches; and while the most celebrated episcopal divines, both popish and protestant, as well as the Scotch church, feel no hesitation in acknowledging

the import of the word baptize is to *immerse*, that such was the primitive mode of baptism, and that the right of infants to that ordinance is rather to be sustained on the ground of ancient usage than the authority of scripture, our dissenting brethren are displeased with these concessions, deny there is any proof that immersion was ever used in primitive times, and speak of the extension of baptism to infants with as much confidence as though it were amongst the plainest and most undeniable dictates of revelation.*

To such a height has this animosity been carried, that there are not wanting persons who seem anxious to revive the recollection of Munster, and by republishing the narrative of the enormities perpetrated there, under the

* Campbell, speaking of the authors of the vulgar version, observes,—"Some words they have transferred from the original into their language; others they have translated. But it would not be always easy to find their reason for making this difference. Thus the word *περιτομὴ* they have translated *circumcisio*, which exactly corresponds in etymology) but the word *βάπτισμα* they have retained, changing only the letters from Greek to Roman. Yet the latter was just as susceptible of a literal version into Latin as the former. *Immersio, tinctio*, answers as exactly in one case, as *circumcisio* does in the other." A little after he observes,—"I should think the word immersion (which though of Latin origin, is an English noun, regularly formed from the word to *immerse*) a better English name than baptism, were we now at liberty to make a choice: but we are not."—*Preliminary Dissertations to the Translation of the Gospels*, pp. 354, 335. 4to Ed.—He elsewhere mentions it as one of the strongest instances of prejudice, that he has known some persons of piety who have denied that the word baptize signifies to immerse.

With respect to the *subject*, it is worthy of observation that the authors of the celebrated scheme of Popish doctrine and discipline called the *Interim*, enumerate the baptism of infants among *traditions*, and that in the most emphatic manner. For, having stated that the church has two rules of faith, scripture and tradition, they observe, after treating of the first, "*ecclesia habet quoque traditiones, inter alia baptismus parvulorum*," &c. They mention, however, no other; from whence it is natural to infer that they considered this as the strongest instance of that species of rules. The total silence of scripture has induced not a few of the most illustrious scholars to consider infant baptism not of divine right; amongst whom, were we disposed to boast of great names, we might mention Salmasius, Suicer, and above all, Sir Isaac Newton, who, if we may believe the honest Whiston, frequently declared to him his conviction that the baptists were the only christians who had not symbolized with the church of Rome.—See *Whiston's Memoirs of his own Life.*

title of the History of the Baptists, to implicate us in the infamy and guilt of those transactions. While we must reprobate such a spirit, we are compelled to acknowledge that the practice of exclusive communion is admirably adapted to excite it, in minds of a certain order.

That practice is not less objectionable on another ground. By discouraging pædobaptists from frequenting our assemblies, it militates against the most effectual means of diffusing the sentiments which we consider most consonant to the sacred oracles. It cannot be expected that pious worshippers will attend, except from absolute necessity, where they are detained, if we may so speak, in the court of the Gentiles, and denied access to the interior privileges of the sanctuary.

The congregations, accordingly, where this practice prevails, are almost entirely composed of persons of our own persuasion, who are so far from requiring an additional stimulus, that it is much oftener necessary to restrain than to excite their ardour; while the only description of persons who could be possibly benefitted by instruction are out of its reach; compelled by this intolerant practice to join societies, where they will hear nothing but what is adapted to confirm them in their ancient prejudices. Thus an impassable barrier is erected betwixt the baptists and other denominations, in consequence of which, few opportunities are afforded of trying the effect of calm and serious argumentation, in situations where alone it could prove effectual. In those baptist churches in which an opposite plan has been adopted, the attendance of such as are not of our sentiments, meeting with no discouragement, is often extensive; baptists and pædobaptists, by participating in the same privileges, become closely united in the ties of friendship; of which the effect is uniformly found to be a perpetual increase in the number of the former, compared to the latter, till, in some societies, the opposite sentiments have nearly subsided and disappeared.

Nor is this more than might be expected from the nature of things, supposing us to have truth on our side. For admitting this to be the case, what can give perma-

nence to the sentiments to which we are opposed, except a recumbent indolence, or an active prejudice? And is it not evident that the practice of exclusive communion has the strongest tendency to foster both those evils, the former by withdrawing, I might say repelling, the erroneous from the best means of instruction, the latter by the apparent harshness and severity of such a proceeding? It is not by keeping at a distance from mankind that we must expect to acquire an ascendency over them, but by approaching, by conciliating them, and securing a passage to their understanding through the medium of their hearts. Truth will glide into the mind through the channel of the affections, which, were it to approach in the naked majesty of evidence, would meet with a certain repulse.

Betraying a total ignorance or forgetfulness of these indubitable facts, what is the conduct of our opponents? They assume a menacing aspect, proclaim themselves the only true church, and assert that they alone are entitled to the christian sacraments. None are alarmed at this language, none are induced to submit; but turning, with a smile or a frown, to gentler leaders, they leave us to triumph without a combat, and to dispute without an opponent.

If we consider the way in which men are led to form just conclusions on the principal subjects of controversy, we shall not often find that it is the fruit of an independent effort of mind, determined to search for truth in her most hidden recesses, and discover her under every disguise. The number of such elevated spirits is small and though evidence is the only source of rational conviction, a variety of favourable circumstances usually contributes to bring it into contact with the mind, such as frequent intercourse, a favourable disposition towards the party which maintains it, habits of deference and respect, and gratitude for benefits received. The practice of confining the communion to our own denomination seems studiously contrived to preclude us from these advantages, and to transfer them to the opposite side.

The policy of intolerance is exactly proportioned to the capacity of inspiring fear. The church of Rome for

many ages practised it, with infinite advantage, because she possessed ample means of intimidation. Her pride grew with her success, her intolerance with her pride; and she did not aspire to the lofty pretension of being the only *true church*, till she saw monarchs at her feet, and held kingdoms in chains; till she was flushed with victory, giddy with her elevation, and drunk with the blood of saints. But what was policy in her, would be the height of infatuation in us, who are neither entitled by our situation, nor by our crimes, to aspire to this guilty preeminence. I am fully persuaded that few of our brethren have duly reflected on the strong resemblance which subsists betwixt the pretensions of the church of Rome, and the principles implied in strict communion; both equally intolerant; the one armed with pains and penalties, the other, I trust, disdaining such aid; the one the intolerance of power, the other of weakness.

From a full conviction that our views as a denomination correspond with the dictates of scripture, it is impossible for me to entertain a doubt of their ultimate prevalence; but, unless we retrace our steps, and cultivate a cordial union with our fellow-christians, I greatly question whether their success will, in any degree, be ascribable to our own efforts. It is much more probable that the light will arise in another quarter, from persons by whom we are unknown, but who, in consequence of an unction from the Holy One, are led to examine the scripture with perfect impartiality, and, in the ardour of their pursuit after truth, alike to overlook the misconduct of those who have opposed, and of those who have maintained it.

Happily, the final triumph of truth is not dependent on human modes of exhibition. Man is the recipient, not the author of it; it partakes of the nature of the Deity; it is his offspring, its indissoluble relation to whom is a surer pledge of its perpetuity and support than finite power or policy. While we are at a certainty respecting the final issue, "the times and the seasons God hath put in his own power;" nor are we ever more liable to err, than when, in surveying the purposes of God, we descend

from the elevation of general views, to a minute specification of times and instruments. How long the ordinance of baptism, in its purity and simplicity, may be doomed to neglect, it is not for us to conjecture; but of this we are fully persuaded, it will never be generally restored to the church through the medium of a party. This mode of procedure has been already sufficiently tried, and is found utterly ineffectual.

The labour bestowed upon these sheets has not arisen from an indifference to the interests of truth, but from a sincere wish to promote them, by disengaging it from the unnatural confinement in which it has been detained by the injudicious conduct of its advocates. How far the reasoning adduced, or the spirit displayed on this subject, is entitled to approbation, must be left to the judgement of the religious public. If any offence has been given by the appearance of unbecoming severity, it will give me real concern; and the more so, because there are not a few amongst our professed opponents in this controversy, to whom I look up with undissembled esteem and veneration.

Having omitted nothing which appeared essentially connected with the subject, I hasten to close this disquisition; previously to which, it may not be improper briefly to recall the attention to the principal topics of argument. We have endeavoured to show that the practice of strict communion derives no support from the supposed priority of baptism to the Lord's supper in the order of institution, which order is exactly the reverse; that it is not countenanced by the tenour of the apostles' commission, nor by apostolic precedent, the spirit of which is in our favour, proceeding on principles totally dissimilar to the case under discussion; that the opposite practice is enforced by the obligations of christian charity; that it is indubitably comprehended within the canon which enjoins forbearance towards mistaken brethren; that the system of our opponents *unchurches* every pædobaptist community; that it rests on no general principle; that it attempts to establish an impossible medium; that it inflicts a punishment which is capricious and unjust; and finally

that, by fomenting prejudice, and precluding the most effectual means of conviction, it defeats its own purpose.

Should the reasoning under any one of these heads be found to be conclusive, however it may fail in others, it will go far towards establishing our leading position, that no church has a right to establish *terms of communion, which are not terms of salvation.* With high consideration of the talents of many of my brethren who differ from me, I have yet no apprehension that the sum total of the argument admits a satisfactory reply.

A tender consideration of human imperfection is not merely the dictate of revelation, but the law of nature, exemplified in the most striking manner, in the conduct of Him whom we all profess to follow. How wide the interval which separated his religious knowledge and attainments from that of his disciples; he, the fountain of illumination, they encompassed with infirmities! But did he recede from them on that account? No: he drew the bond of union closer, imparted successive streams of effulgence, till he incorporated his spirits with theirs, and elevated them into a nearer resemblance of himself. In imitating by our conduct towards our mistaken brethren this great exemplar, we cannot err. By walking together with them, as far as we are agreed, our agreement will extend, our differences lessen, and love, which rejoiceth in the truth, will gradually open our hearts to higher and nobler inspirations.

Might we indulge a hope that not only our denomination, but every other description of christians, would act upon these principles, we should hail the dawn of a brighter day, and consider it as a nearer approach to the ultimate triumph of the church than the annals of time have yet recorded. In the accomplishment of our Saviour's prayer, we should behold a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist; we should behold in the church a peaceful haven, inviting us to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean, to a sacred inclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade.

"Intus aquæ dulces, vivoque sedilia saxo:
Nympharum domus. Hic fessas non vincula naves
Ulla tenent: unco non adligat anchora morsu."—*Virgil.*

The genius of the gospel, let it once for all be remembered, is not ceremonial, but spiritual, consisting, not in meats or drinks, or outward observances, but, in the cultivation of such interior graces, as compose the essence of virtue, perfect the character, and purify the heart. These form the soul of religion; all the rest are but her terrestrial attire, which she will lay aside when she passes the threshold of eternity. When, therefore, the obligations of humility and love come into competition with a punctual observance of external rites, the genius of religion will easily determine to which we should incline: but when the question is not whether we shall attend to them ourselves, but whether we shall enforce them on others, the answer is still more ready. All attempts to urge men forward, even in the right path, beyond the measure of their light, are impracticable in our situation, if they were lawful; and unlawful, if they were practicable. Augment their light, conciliate their affections, and they will follow of their own accord.

POSTSCRIPT.

An objection to the hypothesis which assigns the origin of *christian* baptism to the commission which the apostles received at our Lord's resurrection, may possibly be urged from the baptisms performed by his disciples during his personal ministry; and, as no notice is taken of that circumstance in the body of the work, I beg leave to submit the following observations to the reader:—We are informed by one of the evangelists, that Christ, by the instrumentality of his disciples, at one period "made and baptized more disciples than John."* The following remarks may possibly cast some light on this subject:—

1. A divine commission was given to the son of Zechariah, to announce the speedy manifestation of the Messiah; or, which is equivalent, to declare that "the kingdom of God was at hand," with an injunction solemnly to immerse in water, as many as, in consequence of that intelligence, professed repentance and reformation of life; and as he was the only person who had been known to initiate his disciples by that rite, it was natural for him to be distinguished by the appellation of the Baptist, or the immerser. The Scriptures are totally silent respecting any mission to baptize apart from his. It is by no means certain, however, that he was the only person who performed that ceremony; indeed, when we consider the prodigious multitudes who flocked to him, the "inhabitants of Jerusalem, Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan," it seems scarcely practicable; he most probably employed coadjutors,

* John iv. 1.

though the practice having originated with him, it was foreign to the purpose of the evangelists to notice that circumstance.

2. Our Lord, who had already evinced the profoundest respect to his mission, by receiving baptism at his hands, was, in consequence of his being the Messiah, undoubtedly authorised personally to perform any religious rite or office which was at that time in force, as well as to delegate to others the power of performing it; and as immersion, in token of repentance and preparation for the kingdom of God, then at hand, was an important branch of the religion then obligatory, it was with the greatest propriety that he not only submitted to it himself, but authorised his disciples to perform it. This, however, is by no means sufficient to constitute a distinct rite or ordinance; and since it was not accompanied with a distinct signification, it could not be considered as originating a new constitution, but as a mere co-operation with his forerunner in one and the same work.

3. We have already shown at large that the principal difference betwixt John's baptism, and that which the apostles were commissioned to perform after our Saviour's ascension, consisted in the former not being celebrated in the name of Jesus. But there is just as much difficulty in supposing it performed by his disciples in that name, during his abode on earth, as by his forerunner. It would have equally defeated the purpose of that caution which he uniformly maintained; and it is absurd to suppose that he would strictly charge his disciples to tell no man that he was the Christ, while he authorised them to disclose that very secret to the mixed multitude, as often as they baptized; nor could the use of his name in that ordinance be separated from such a disclosure.

4. In addition to this, it must be remembered that John and our Lord (by the hands of his disciples) both baptized at the same period: their ministry was contemporary. Now if we assert that our Lord enjoined one confession of faith in baptism, and John another, we shall have different dispensations of religion subsisting at the same time, and must suppose the people were under an

obligation to believe one thing as the disciples of John, and another as the disciples of Christ. But this it is impossible to admit. There is unquestionably, at all seasons, a perfect harmony in the economies of religion, so that two different ones are never in force at one and the same time. The first ceases when the second succeeds, just as Judaism was abolished by Christianity, and the patriarchial dispensation superseded by Judaism. Unless we are prepared to assert that the dispensations of religion are not obligatory, one light in which they must be considered is that of different laws, or codes of law; but it is essential to the nature of laws, that the new one, except it be merely declaratory, invariably repeals the old. In whatever particular it differs, it necessarily abolishes or annuls the former. But as John continued to baptize by divine authority, at the same time with the disciples of our Saviour, it is evident his institution was not superseded; consequently, it was of such a nature that it could subsist in conjunction with the baptism performed by our Lord, through the hands of his apostles. But for the reason already alleged, this could not have been the case, unless it had been one and the same thing. The inference I wish to deduce from the whole is, that the baptism celebrated by Christ's disciples, during his personal ministry, in no respect differed from John's, either in the action itself, or in the import, but were merely a joint execution of the same work; agreeably to which, we find a perfect identity in the language which our Saviour enjoined his disciples to use, and in the preaching of John: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Whatever information our Lord imparted to his disciples beyond that which was communicated by his forerunner, (which we all know was much,) was given in detached portions, at distinct intervals, and was never embodied or incorporated with any positive institution, till after his ascension, which may be considered as the commencement of the christian dispensation in its strictest sense.

THE

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

AND THE

BAPTISM OF JOHN,

MORE FULLY STATED AND CONFIRMED;

IN REPLY TO A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED "A PLEA FOR PRIMITIVE COMMUNION."

[PUBLISHED IN 1816.]

PREFACE.

WHETHER the writer of the following pages has acted judiciously in noticing the anonymous author of the *Plea, &c.* it is not for him to determine. He was certainly not induced to reply by any apprehension that the arguments of his opponent would produce much effect on candid and enlightened minds: but he recollected that what is not answered, is often deemed unanswerable. He has confined himself, as the reader will perceive, to that branch of the controversy which relates to the baptism of John: the consideration of the remaining parts, will more properly occur in reply to a work which is already announced to the public by a person of distinguished reputation. With an answer to that publication, it is the decided resolution of this author to terminate *his* part of the controversy.

LEICESTER,
February 14, 1816.

THE

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE

BETWIXT

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

AND THE

BAPTISM OF JOHN.

THOUGH the author of the "Plea for Primitive Communion" has not thought fit to annex his name to that publication, as truth alone is the legitimate object of controversy, his claim to attention may be justly considered as little, if at all, impaired by that omission. Religious inquiry is an affair of principles, not of persons; and under whatever shape an author chooses to present himself to the public, he is entitled to notice in proportion to the force of his conceptions, and the candour of his spirit. How far the author under present consideration is possessed of these qualities, must be left to the judgement of an impartial public.

As he has confined nearly his whole attention to the question of the identity of John's baptism with the ordinance now in force, without pretending to enter into the general merits of the controversy, and this is a question which admits of separate discussion, and is in itself of some moment, the following pages will be devoted to a defence of the sentiments which have been already advanced on that subject.

Previously to this, however, the patience of the reader is entreated for a few moments, while we endeavour clearly to state the *bearing* of this question on the controversy with which it has been connected. It was in deference to the sentiments of his opponents, rather than his own, that the author was induced to bestow so much attention upon it in his former treatise, persuaded as he is, that its connexion with the point in debate is casual and incidental, rather than real and intrinsic; since the only possible advantage to the cause of mixed communion resulting from its decision, is the overthrow of an argument most feebly constructed. To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to remember that the admission of what our opponents contend for, would merely prove that the ordinance of baptism was promulgated at an *earlier period* than the Lord's supper. But in determining a question of duty resulting from positive laws, the era of their promulgation is a consideration totally foreign; we have merely to consider *what is enjoined*, and to what description of persons or things the regulation applies, without troubling ourselves to inquire into the chronological order of its enactment. In the details of civil life, no man thinks of regulating his actions by an appeal to the respective dates of the existing laws, but solely by a regard to their just interpretation; and were it once admitted as a maxim, that the particular law latest enacted, must invariably be last obeyed, the affairs of mankind would fall into utter confusion. It would be the highest presumption to pretend to penetrate so far into the breast of the legislator, and into reasons of state, as to form a conjecture on the comparative importance of our duties, or the respective relations which they bear to each other, by an appeal to the distinct periods in which the laws were promulgated; nor is there any absurdity in supposing it possible that, for the wisest purposes, the law which is *last* enacted may prescribe the performance of an action antecedently to a different one enjoined by a prior enactment. Besides, the most extensive branch of the system of rules which is in force in this, and perhaps in most other countries, arises out of

immemorial customs, which it would baffle the profoundest antiquarian to trace to their origin; whence it is evident that the principle in question is necessarily excluded from the widest department of legal obligations. It is a principle as repugnant to the nature of divine as it is to human legislation. It appears from the history of the patriarchs, that sacrificial rites were ordained much earlier than circumcision, but no sooner was the latter enjoined, than it demanded the earliest attention; and the offerings prescribed on the birth of a child, did not precede, but were subsequent to the ceremony of circumcision.

In the case of moral obligations, no one pretends that their reciprocal relation and dependence is to be ascertained by an appeal to the distinct periods of their institution: their co-existence with human nature precludes the possibility of applying such a test; and he who consults impartially the dictates of conscience, confirmed and enlightened by revelation, will seldom feel himself embarrassed with respect either to the nature or the order of his duties.

In the case of positive duties, that is, such as result entirely from the *revealed* will of God, and with respect to which the voice of nature is silent, how far they are so inseparably linked together as to form a moral whole, in such a manner that the omission of one part renders an attention to the other a nullity, must depend entirely on the language of the institute. To attempt to establish any conclusion where that is silent, is at once to incur the censure justly attached to the application of hypothesis in the interpretation of positive laws, with this additional aggravation, that the hypothesis adopted on the present occasion is at least as precarious and unfounded as the worst of those by which the advocates of infant baptism have attempted to vindicate their practice. With unparalleled inconsistency, while the champions of strict communion affect, on the subject of baptism, the utmost veneration for the letter of scripture, they are driven in support of their sentiments to appeal, not to *what is enjoined*—not to a syllable of scripture, but to a chronologi-

cal deduction of positive rites; a hard necessity surely, and the more so when it will appear in the sequel, that this their forlorn post is untenable.

Before we proceed to notice the objections of the author of the *Plea* to the statements which have been made on the subject of John's baptism, it will be necessary briefly to recapitulate the grounds on which it was affirmed to be essentially distinct from the ordinance now in use. To such as have not perused the former treatise, the discussion would scarcely be intelligible without it: to such as have, it is possible some particulars may be presented in a clearer light.

The attentive reader of the New Testament will not have failed to remark that the rite performed by John is rarely, if ever, introduced without the addition of some explanatory phrase, or epithet, intended apparently to distinguish it from every preceding or subsequent religious observance. Thus it is sometimes denominated the baptism of John, on other occasions baptism in water, and the baptism of repentance, but is never expressed in the absolute form in which the mention of christian baptism invariably occurs. When the twelve disciples at Ephesus were asked into what (i. e. into what profession) they were baptized, they replied, into the baptism of John. Though innumerable persons were baptized by St. Paul, we read of no such expression as the baptism of Paul; on the contrary, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, he expresses a sort of pious horror at the very idea of such a supposition. Whoever considers the extreme precision which the inspired historians maintain in the choice of the terms employed to represent religious ordinances, will perceive this circumstance to possess considerable weight.

It derives much additional strength, however, from reflecting, that John's baptism is not only distinctly characterized in the evangelical narratives, but that he himself contrasts it with a superior one, which he directs his hearers to expect at the hand of the Messiah. "I indeed," said he, "baptize you in water, but there standeth one among you whose shoe-latchets I am not worthy to

unloose; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and in fire;"* referring unquestionably to that redundance of prophetic and miraculous gifts, which were bestowed on the church after the effusion of the Spirit. We accordingly find that, after his resurrection, our Lord commissioned his apostles to teach and baptize all nations, the execution of which order was *usually* accompanied by the collation of such gifts on believers, as fully corresponded to those predictions. Though he who is confined to no times or seasons, was pleased in some instances to communicate these preternatural endowments previously to the act of baptizing, at others not in connexion with that rite; yet that they were its usual and expected concomitants, is evident from the language of St. Paul to the disciples at Ephesus, who, not having heard of such an effusion of the Spirit, were interrogated in the following terms: "Into what then were ye baptized?"†— a question totally irrelevant but upon the supposition that these gifts were the usual appendage or effect of that ordinance. No such consequences followed the rite administered by John; an important disparity, to which he himself repeatedly directed the attention of his followers, as a decisive proof of his personal inferiority to him that *was to come*, as well as of the ceremony he administered, to that which should usher in the succeeding dispensation. In exact agreement with the genius of eastern phraseology, he suppresses the mention of *water* on this occasion, choosing rather to characterize an ordinance accompanied with such stupendous effects, by its more elevated feature, rather than by one in which it coincided with his own.

Again, it is universally admitted that christian baptism has invariably been administered in the name of Jesus, and that circumstance is essential to its validity; while it is evident from the solicitude with which our Saviour avoided the avowal of himself as the Messiah, that during his personal ministry his name was not publicly employed as the object of a religious rite. After he had

* See Matt. iii. 11, and John i. 27, 33. Campbell's translation.

† Acts xix. 3.

been declared on the mount of transfiguration to be the Son of God, he charged his disciples to tell no man of it till he was risen from the dead; and when Peter had solemnly avowed his profession of faith in him under the same character, he and his fellow-apostles were strictly enjoined to tell no man that he *was the Christ*. Nor is there a single example of his publicly acknowledging that fact, until his arraignment before the high-priest. But how this is consistent with the practice of baptizing in his name, which must have been equivalent at least to a public confession of his being the Messiah, it is difficult to conceive. If we examine the matter more closely, we shall perceive that ceremony to import much more; that it includes an act of adoration and of worship, of which He, in whose name we are immersed, is the avowed object. To multiply words, with a view to demonstrate the inconsistency of such a procedure with the acknowledged reserve maintained by our Lord on this subject, would be to insult the understanding of my readers; nor, when furnished with certain matter of fact, are we left to form an opinion from previous probabilities. The historian informs us that while John was baptizing, amidst an immense concourse of people from various parts of Judea, *all men were musing in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not*,* and that the deputation sent from the Sanhedrim to inquire into his character, were disposed to infer, from his introducing a new religious rite, that he pretended himself to be the Messiah. But how is it possible, let me ask, that such a question should arise amongst the people on the hypothesis maintained by our opponents? or how could it enter into their imagination to infer, from his baptizing in the name of Jesus, that he himself was, or that he pretended to be, the Messiah? His constant and daily practice must have completely precluded such a suspicion.

If St. Paul's citation of the language of John, in the nineteenth of the Acts, be correct, what he said to the people was this—"That they *should* believe on him who

* Luke iii. 15.

was to come."* The epithet, ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he who is coming*, it is generally admitted, was the usual appellation applied to the Messiah at that period, which, while it expresses the certainty and near approach of the event of his coming, intimates, not less clearly, *its futurity*. At the time when the son of Zechariah entered on his ministry, nothing could be more accurate than the idea conveyed by that phraseology—the Messiah was not yet manifest to Israel; John was sent before him to announce his speedy appearance: he was as yet coming, not actually come, on which account the language which the forerunner held was precise and appropriate; it was not a demand of present faith in any known individual, but was limited to a *future* faith on a certain personage who was about to evince his title to the character he assumed, by his personal appearance and miracles. He said to the people that they *should* believe in him that was to come. Could the same person, let me ask, at the same moment be described by terms expressive of the present and of the future tense, at once as an existing individual, a person historically known, and as one that was to come? In a word, if John expressed the act of faith which he required, in the future tense,† it unquestionably respected a future act; and if he described its object under the term ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he that is to come*, he did not immerse in the name of Jesus, which would have been a palpable contradiction.

Again, the spiritual import of christian baptism, as asserted by St. Paul, transcends incomparably the measure of religious knowledge possessed during the ministry of John. "Know ye not," is his appeal to christians, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."‡ We have here an appeal to the conscience of all baptized persons respecting the spiritual signification of that ordi-

* Acts xix. 4. † πιστευσωσι, Acts xix. 4.
‡ Rom. vi. 3, 4.

nance, the views which it embraced, and the obligations resulting from thence to a holy and heavenly life. What is the meaning of the words, *baptized into his death*? Whatever else it may comprehend, it unquestionably means the being baptized into a belief of his death. But at the time that John was fulfilling his course, this belief was so far from possessing the minds of his converts, that even the apostles were not only ignorant of that event, but impatient of its mention; and, with respect to his resurrection, we find these same apostles, after the transfiguration, inquiring among themselves "what the rising from the dead could mean;"* while, from the expectation of the Jews at large, nothing was more abhorrent than the death and crucifixion of their Messiah. While they were thus unacquainted with the principal fact it is designed to exhibit, how could they possibly comprehend the import of christian baptism? In all probability they regarded the consecrated use of water merely as an emblem of purification, of that reformation of manners to which they were summoned; for to such a use of it they had long been accustomed; but for the sublime mysteries of the christian sacrament, connected with events of which they were ignorant, and with truths which were veiled from their eyes, they were utterly unprepared. It is impossible to evade the force of this argument, by distinguishing betwixt the disciples of John and those who were converted to the christian faith at a subsequent period. The language of St. Paul precludes the possibility of such a distinction. "*As many of us*," says he, "as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death;" which is surely equivalent to affirming that whoever were not baptized into his death, were not baptized into Christ. But the disciples of John were not baptized into (the belief of) his death. Therefore they were not baptized into Christ.

We have already remarked, in a former treatise, that as the ministry of John commenced previously to that of the Messiah, which succeeded his baptism, no rite cele-

* Mark ix. 10.

brated at that time is entitled to a place amongst christian sacraments, since they did not commence with the christian dispensation, nor issue from the authority of Christ, as Head of the church. The sacraments properly christian, undoubtedly belong to *the kingdom of God;* a phrase which is constantly employed in scripture to denote that state of things which is placed under the avowed administration of the Messiah, and which consequently could not precede his personal appearance. But during his residence on earth, until his resurrection, this kingdom is uniformly represented as future, though near at hand. Even after John's imprisonment, the language which he held respecting that object is the same: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel;"* which is also the precise intelligence he commanded the seventy disciples to proclaim,† a little before his decease. He was inaugurated into his office at his baptism, till which period he remained in the obscurity of private life, at the utmost remove from assuming a legislative character.

An attention to the general history of the period to which these transactions refer, will conduct us to the same conclusion. When we consider the great popularity attached to the ministry of the forerunner, and the general submission of the Jewish people to his doctrine, it is in the highest degree improbable, that of the three thousand who were added by St. Peter to the church on one day, there were none who had been previously his disciples: this incredible supposition is reduced to an impossibility, when we recollect, that of the twelve apostles, two are actually affirmed by an evangelist to have been of that number. But as it is universally admitted, that they who were savingly convinced of the truth of christianity after the Pentecost, were baptized on that occasion, what conclusion can be more inevitable, than that the rite administered by the harbinger of our Lord, was essentially distinct from the christian ordinance?

To conclude this branch of the subject; the Acts of the Apostles furnish us with a decisive instance of an

* Mark i. 15. † Luke x. 9.

apostle's rebaptizing certain disciples of John at Ephesus, but, as we shall have occasion hereafter to examine that incident more fully, in reply to the evasions of the author of the *Plea*, I shall content myself at present with barely referring to it.

Such are the principal grounds on which we have ventured to assert the fundamental disparity betwixt the baptism of John and the christian institute.

We now proceed to notice the manner in which the author of the *Plea for Primitive Communion* attempts to evade these arguments.

I. He endeavours to invalidate the assertion that John's commission did not originate in the command of Christ, or that he, on any occasion, ascribes his mission to the Father, in distinction from the Son. The author of *Terms of Communion* is charged with representing "John as uniformly doing that of which there is no decisive evidence he ever did at all; that is, ascribe his commission to the Father, *in distinction from the Son.*"*

We should have supposed that when the origin of a certain proceeding is constantly assigned to one agent, and no notice is taken of another, there is no impropriety in affirming that the proceeding in question is ascribed to him who *is* mentioned, in distinction from him who is *not*. But let the scripture speak for itself, and let the reader judge whether John did, or did not, ascribe his commission to the Father, in distinction from any other person. "He who sent me to baptize," said he, "the same said unto me, He on whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, He it is who shall baptize in the Holy Ghost and in fire."† Here the personage speaking distinguishes himself from the Messiah, as clearly as words can distinguish him, for he speaks of Christ in the third person, while he himself is denoted by the first: and so uniform is the language of scripture on this subject, that not a syllable is to be found in which the mission of John is ascribed to any other person than the Father.

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 21.
† John i. 33. See the original.

But to ascribe any operation whatever to the Father in distinction from the Son, this writer contends, is inconsistent with the belief of the ineffable union which subsists betwixt those divine personages.* "Will those," he asks, "who believe the ineffable union of the Father and the Son, be disposed to conclude from this text that John derived his authority from the Father, to the exclusion of the Son?" To which I reply, that, believing firmly as himself, that there is such a union subsisting betwixt the personages in the blessed Godhead as constitutes them one living and true God, instead of inferring from thence, the impropriety of distinguishing their operations, it has always appeared to me, that the chief advantage resulting from the doctrine of the Trinity is, that it facilitates our conception of the plan of redemption, in which each of these glorious persons is represented as assuming distinct, though harmonious, offices and functions; the Father originating, so to speak, the Son executing, and the Spirit applying the several parts of that stupendous scheme. The Father, accordingly, is uniformly asserted to have sent the Son, the Son to have assumed the office of Mediator, and the Spirit to be imparted by both, to enlighten and sanctify the elect people of God. If we suffer ourselves to lose sight of such an application of the doctrine, it subsides into barren and useless speculation. And are we to be told that such is the ineffable union betwixt the Father and the Son, that the distinct exercise of these functions is an impossibility? We should have supposed that the act of *sending*, at least, might be safely ascribed to the Father, in distinction from the Son; unless, perhaps, this author, in the plenitude of his subtlety, has discovered a method by which a person may send himself. In spite of attempts to bewilder the plain reader by unmeaning abstractions, it will remain a palpable fact, that John's commission is ascribed to the Father, and to him alone; and that having originated before our Saviour assumed the legislative function, it is in no respect entitled to be considered as

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 21.

a christian institute. In addition to which we have only to remark, that to insist upon deriving John's mission from our Lord, is to implicate him in the charge of employing a collusive mode of reasoning. In reproving the unbelief of the Jews, he observes that "he did not bear witness of himself;" for had he done so, "his witness had not been true," in other words, not entitled to credit: but he adds, "there is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bore witness to the truth."* But if the person to whose testimony he appeals in proof of his mission, was sent by himself, where is the force of this reasoning, or what difference in point of credibility is there, betwixt his bearing witness of himself, and his prompting another to do it for him?

II. The author of the *Plea* next endeavours to show the *identity* of the qualifications demanded by the forerunner of our Lord, with those which were demanded by his apostles after the day of Pentecost. After objecting to the accuracy of my statement on that article, without attempting to point out in what its incorrectness consists, he proceeds to remark, that, allowing it to be unexceptionably just, it will prove that the requisitions which were supposed to be different, coalesce into one and the same thing. The reason he adduces is the following: "As both John and the apostles are described as demanding faith, so that faith is to have the same object, and to be connected with the same facts in relation to that object, only some of these facts John's disciples were to view as approaching; while the faith of those baptized by the apostles, embraced them as having actually occurred; for the great events respecting the Messiah, as boldly appealed to faith when only occupying the prophetic page, as they do now they are become interesting details in the evangelical history."†

It will be freely admitted that the Saviour of the world is, in every period, and under every economy, the

* John v. 31—33.
† Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 23.

sole object of saving faith; but to infer from hence, that the profession which John demanded was an appendage of the dispensation introduced on the day of Pentecost, would equally demonstrate the Levitical ceremonies to belong to it, and would thus carry back the christian dispensation to the time of Moses. The next assertion, "that the belief of the same facts was required in the former instance as in the latter," is palpably absurd, as well as the reason assigned, which is, that they were foretold by the ancient prophets, and "that prophecy as boldly appealed to faith as the narrative of the evangelist." Every one must perceive, that if there is any force in this argument, it will prove that *whatever* was predicted of the Messiah must have been distinctly understood and firmly embraced by the disciples of the forerunner, as an essential prerequisite to the reception of baptism; since whatever was thus predicted was unquestionably presented as the object of faith; the place of his birth, his vicarious suffering, his resurrection, the spiritual nature of his kingdom, his rejection by the Jews, and the triumphant progress of the gospel amongst the Gentiles, with an infinite number of other particulars, were attested by the prophets. But will this author contend that all these circumstances were understood by John's converts, at a time when the immediate disciples of our Lord were intoxicated with the hopes of an earthly kingdom, and totally unapprised of their Master's death? Or will he condescend to inform us on what principle so much more was requisite to constitute a disciple of John than an apostle of the Lord? Had it been a question of duty, instead of an inquiry into matter of fact, no difficulty would have been felt in acknowledging the justice of the rebuke which the apostles received for their hardness of heart, in not opening their minds more freely to the true interpretation of scripture. A cloud of carnal prejudices undoubtedly eclipsed a considerable portion of revealed truth; though, with the best dispositions, much must have remained obscure till the ancient prophecies were fulfilled. Previous to that period, if we listen to the inspired writers, instead of the author of the *Plea*,

neither the prophets understood their own predictions, nor the apostles their true interpretation. To apply revelation in its utmost extent, without the smallest allowance for the inevitable involutions of prophecy, as a criterion of the portion of knowledge actually possessed by the successive generations of the faithful, is a mode of reasoning peculiar to this writer. *We* possess in the Apocalypse, a series of prophecies extending to the consummation of all things, a large portion of which is confessedly involved in obscurity; but what opinion should we entertain of the sagacity of him, who, at a period subsequent to their accomplishment, should contend that we of this age must necessarily have been apprised of the events which they foretold, solely on the ground of their being the subject of prophecy? Such a reasoner will be the properest person to write a sequel to the *Plea for Primitive Communion*.

The author has been betrayed into these absurdities, by confounding together two things totally distinct—a sincere belief in the truth of inspiration, with an explicit knowledge of its contents. The prophets were invested with credentials which entitled them to the profound submission of mankind; but to receive their predictions as the word of God, is one thing, and so to penetrate their scope and intention as to be in possession of precisely the same facts, and acquainted with the same truths, with those who lived to witness their accomplishment, is another. All good men equally possessing the former, had the same *spirit* of faith; while, with respect to the latter, the situation of the hearers of the prophets under the law, and of the apostolic converts under the gospel, was most dissimilar. It is certain, from the eulogiums bestowed upon John, that his attainments in religious knowledge surpassed the highest of those of his predecessors; yet we are informed from the same authority, that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. But in what is this superiority, so universally ascribed to christians, to be placed, except in an acquaintance with the facts attested after the day of Pentecost, and a knowledge of the mysteries

with which they are inseparably allied? These, however, form the very core and substance of the apostolical testimony, the unshaken profession of which was the indispensable condition of baptism; and among the foremost and most fundamental of these are the vicarious death and resurrection of our Lord, which we are compelled by their own testimony to believe were most remote from the previous expectation and belief of the apostles. Christian baptism is the "answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

In order to demonstrate the equality of the requisitions of John with those of the apostles, this writer has attempted to exhibit them in opposite columns. These columns, however, are not very majestic, nor very uniform, including only three passages on one side, and four on the other. Two remarks may be amply sufficient to counteract the effect of a device which is addressed to the eyes rather than to the understanding. The first is, that the explicit testimony which the harbinger bore to the character of our Lord, after his baptism, is adduced without the slightest advertence to the distinction of times, as a proof of the manner in which he first announced his commission; but as his knowledge of the person of the Messiah, we learn from his own declaration, was subsequent to that event, his language must necessarily have been modified by that circumstance. The second is, that we have no more reason to suppose that *his* disciples comprehended the true import of his instructions, or that they interpreted them aright, than that the immediate disciples of our Lord understood similar declarations of their Master; from whom, we are infallibly certain, the sublimest part of his teaching was hid, until it was elucidated by events. And what but a blind attachment to hypothesis can obviate the suspicion that the followers of John were in the same predicament, unless we are prepared to affirm, either that they were the apter scho-

* 1 Peter iii. 21.

lars, or had the more skilful master? As this writer lately applied the ample volume of prophecy as a criterion to ascertain the minimum, or lowest measure of knowledge requisite to constitute a disciple of John, so he now, with equal propriety, puts together all the scattered sayings of that great prophet, for the same purpose. If this be admitted in the case of the forerunner, it can, with no consistency, be withheld in the instance of our Lord; and by measuring the actual attainments of the apostles by the extent of his instructions, we shall find them little less enlightened and intelligent after his resurrection, than they were before that event. The fact, however, is far otherwise.

It requires little penetration to perceive that the true method of ascertaining (as far as it is practicable) the essential qualifications of John's candidates, is, not so much to consult detached sentences recorded of his ministry, as the actual state of religious knowledge at that period, the known attainments of the apostles, and above all, the language he is affirmed to have uttered, at the moment he was celebrating his peculiar rite.

Whatever ideas he himself might affix to the terms "Lamb of God," and "Son of God," which it may not be easy exactly to determine, we may be certain that his followers did not comprehend their true import, because the apostles themselves were, long after, ignorant of the principal fact, or doctrine, denoted by the first of these appellations; and, therefore, to introduce these passages, as this writer has done, with a design to insinuate that they conveyed to the mind precisely the same impression as at present, is to presume too much on the simplicity of the reader. He should have been aware, that few are so bereft of the power of recollection, as to be incapable of detecting such flimsy sophistry.

Aware that confidence is contagious, he uniformly abounds in that quality in exact proportion to the weakness of his proofs. Of this, the following passage exhibits an egregious example:—After surveying his columns with a complacency not unlike the restorer of Babylon, he triumphantly exclaims, "Even prejudice itself might

be expected to acknowledge, that so far from any material variation between John and the apostles, in introducing their respective candidates to baptism, they made a near approach to a syllabic agreement."*

To say nothing at present of the name of Jesus, a point we shall have occasion to discuss hereafter, did John require of his candidates a profession of their belief in Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension? If he did, he was a superior teacher to his Master, and his disciples greater proficients than the apostles; a proposition which, however "boldly it may appeal to our faith," it is hard to digest. If, on the contrary, he acknowledges that a belief of these facts was *not* required by John as the condition of baptism, while it unquestionably was of the apostolic converts, what becomes of this syllabic agreement? and what temerity, not to say impiety, to represent these stupendous events, the death and resurrection of the Saviour, which involve the destinies of the human race, the incessant theme of the apostolic ministry, the basis of hope, the pillar, not the miserable columns of a page, but the column which props and supports a sinking universe, an affair of syllables, so that whether they are omitted or included, there exists a *syllabic agreement!*

Justly apprehensive of fatiguing the attention of the reader, the author cannot prevail on himself to dismiss this branch of the subject without bestowing a word more on the fallacious *medium* of proof employed in this instance by the writer of the *Plea*. Prophecy, he informs us, as "boldly appealed to faith" as history; from which the only legitimate inference is, that the disciple of revelation is as much under obligation to give implicit credit to the prophets, as to the evangelists. *His* inference, however, is, that the precise measure of information yielded by the historian, must of necessity be possessed by the student of prophecy; than which nothing is more absurd and untenable. To reason in this manner is, in the first place, to forget the prodigious disparity in point of perspicuity betwixt the respective sources of

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 24.

information; and, secondly, in opposition to the decisive and repeated testimonies of inspiration, to presume that good men have uniformly exerted the ardour, impartiality, and diligence, in the pursuit of truth, to which it is justly entitled. Besides, when it is asserted that the prophetic page "as boldly appeals to faith, as the details of evangelical history," an ambiguity lurks in the word *appeal*, as well suited to the purposes of sophistry, as it is unfavourable to the enunciation of truth. It may either mean that it demands the *same credit* with historical details, or that it imposes an obligation to believe the same facts, and to penetrate the same mysteries. In the former sense the assertion is true, but foreign to the purpose; in the latter it is palpably false; at once repugnant to the nature of things as well as to the plainest fact. Many of the most important predictions were involved in a total obscurity; others were designed to excite a vague but elevated expectation, without ascertaining the features of a future event; none were designed to make that clear and determinate impression upon the spirit, which is effected by their accomplishment. From the necessary obscurity of prophecy, combined with the ignorance and prejudice which obstruct its operation, it is impossible, in any case, by appealing to a prediction to ascertain the sentiments entertained even by good men antecedently to its fulfilment. The only clew to conduct us in this inquiry, is derived from the assertions of the evangelists, which as clearly confute the vain surmises and conjectures of this writer as if they had been recorded for that purpose.

The word *faith*, to the illiterate reader, is almost sure to suggest all the sentiments and ideas with which the gospel has made him familiar; and when we attempt to limit its objects by an impartial appeal to the actual state of religious knowledge before the coming of Christ, he feels himself confounded and amazed. His exclusive acquaintance with the present disqualifies him for transporting himself into past ages, and conceiving the ideas and sentiments prevalent in a situation so dissimilar. To

do justice to the author of the *Plea*, it must be acknowledged, he has shown no inconsiderable skill in availing himself of this prejudice.

What were the *precise views* entertained by the true Israel, of the offices of the Messiah, and of the work of redemption, previously to the christian æra, is one of the most curious and intricate questions of theology. Without attempting its solution, the writer of these lines may be permitted to remark that the Jewish belief was probably much more defective, and differed much farther from the christian, than has usually been suspected. The ignorance of the apostles, till after the resurrection, is a fundamental fact, a datum, which should never be lost sight of in this inquiry. It is not necessary, however, to assume it as a standard by which to regulate our estimate of every preceding degree of information. For when we recollect the long suspension of prophetic gifts in the Jewish church, the withdrawment of the Urim and Thummim, the extinction, in its sensible effects at least, of the theocracy, the intermixture of Jews and Gentiles, inseparable from the introduction of a pagan government, the influence of oriental philosophy, the division of the people into sects, and the extreme profligacy and corruption of manners prevalent at the time of our Lord's nativity, it will probably appear to have been the darkest period the church had experienced—resembling that portion of the natural day which immediately precedes the dawn, when the nocturnal light is extinguished, and the reflection of a brighter luminary not commenced.

But with all the consideration due to these circumstances, (and probably much is due,) there is still reason to suspect that the average degree of knowledge which divines have been accustomed to ascribe to Jewish believers, has been overrated. From the typical institution of piacular sacrifices, pointing to the *great propitiation*, it has been confidently concluded, that in them believers distinctly recognised the mystery of atonement, by the blood of Christ. But supposing such to have been the fact, how shall we account for that doctrine occupying so small a portion of the succeeding prophecies;

or for its so completely vanishing from the national creed, that the crucifixion of Christ afterwards became a stumbling block to the Jews, not less than foolishness to the Gentiles? A doctrine so congenial to the feelings of penitent devotion, involving the primary basis of hope, had it once been embraced, would undoubtedly have been inculcated with the utmost care, and transmitted to the posterity of the faithful in uninterrupted succession, instead of being suffered to fall into such oblivion that at the time of the Saviour's advent every trace of it had disappeared. While christianity subsists, we entertain no apprehension of this great doctrine falling into neglect; its intrinsic evidence and importance will perpetuate it, unquestionably, amidst all the fluctuations of systems and opinions; and by parity of reason, its clear enunciation to the Jewish church, must have been productive of similar effects.

If we read the ancient prophecies with attention, we shall perceive, that the atonement made by the Saviour is scarcely exhibited in a single passage, except in the fifty-third of Isaiah, with respect to which the Ethiopian eunuch was at a loss to determine whether the "prophet spoke of himself, or of some other man:" we shall perceive that in the practical and devotional books, such as the Psalms, the promise of pardon to the penitent and of favour to the righteous, are expressly and repeatedly propounded, though with respect to the *medium* of acceptance, a profound silence is maintained. But how this is consistent with the supposed knowledge of that medium, it is not easy to discover. The habitual reserve on this subject maintained by the writers of the Old Testament, compared to its constant inculcation in the New, forms the grand distinction betwixt these respective portions of revelation; clearly evincing the truth of the apostle's assertion, that "the way into the holiest was not made manifest" while the ancient sanctuary subsisted.

It will perhaps be replied—Are we then to renounce the notion of the typical nature of sacrificial rites, and, in contradiction to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to assert that they bore no reference to the great propitiation? Nothing is more foreign from the purpose of these remarks.

That the ceremonial law was a prefiguration of good things to come, and owed its validity and efficacy entirely to the analogy which it bore to the *true sacrifice*, is placed beyond all reasonable controversy. All that is contended for is, that the reference which it bore was not understood, during the subsistence of that economy; that it is not to be considered as an interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, so much as a sort of temporary substitute for that discovery, and that it was a system of ciphers, or symbols, the true interpretation of which was reserved to a future period. It is no more essential to the existence of a type that its import be understood before it is verified, than it is essential to prophecy that its just interpretation be comprehended before it is fulfilled. If we consider the benefit derived to the ancient church, from prophecy in its strictest sense, we shall find it consisted not in making men prophets, or enabling them to foretel future events, but rather in maintaining high and consolatory views of the providence and the attributes of God, accompanied with a firm but humble assurance of his gracious interposition in their concerns.

A general expectation of the Messiah's advent, as of some glorious and divine personage, who would bestow the highest spiritual and temporal felicity, without descending to details, or foreseeing the *precise method* by which his interposition was to become effectual, appears to have nearly bounded the views of such as "waited for the consolation of Israel." Thus vague and general, at least, were the expectations of the faithful at the time of his appearance: to suppose they were ever materially different, is a gratuitous supposition, totally devoid of proof.

In discussing this point, it is expedient to distinguish betwixt the *fact*, and the *doctrine* of the atonement. The aspect of the atonement of God considered as a *transaction* is towards God; considered as a *doctrine*, towards man. Viewed in the former light, its operation is essential, unchangeable, eternal—"He was the Lamb

slain from the foundation of the world." Considered in the latter, its operation is moral, and therefore subject to all the varieties incident to human nature. The cross, considered as the meritorious basis of acceptance, the only real satisfaction for sin, is the centre around which all the purposes of mercy to fallen man have continued to revolve: fixed and determined in the council of God, it operated as the grand consideration in the divine mind, on which salvation was awarded to penitent believers in the earliest ages, as it will continue to operate in the same manner to the latest boundaries of time. Hence it is manifest that this great transaction could admit of no substitute. But that discovery of it, which constitutes the *doctrine* of the atonement, though highly important, is not of equal necessity. Its moral impression, its beneficial effects on the mind, were capable of being secured by the institution of sacrifice, though in an inferior degree; while the offender, by confessing his sins over the head of the victim, which he afterwards slew, distinctly recognised his guilt, his just exposure to destruction, and his exclusive reliance on divine mercy.

By such elements of penitential sorrow, and humble submission, accompanied with a general expectation of a Messiah, devout worshippers were prepared for the reception of the sublimer mysteries of the gospel; and thus "the law became a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ."

When St. Paul asserts that the same law was a shadow of "good things to come, and not the very image of those things," he clearly intimates an essential difference between the two economies, and that the Mosaic did not afford that acquaintance with the method of pardon and reconcilement, which constitutes the distinguishing glory of the gospel. But if the Levitical sacrifices instructed the pious Jew in the doctrine of vicarious atonement as it is now exhibited, they were already possessed of the substance, and the law could with no propriety be styled a schoolmaster intended to lead *them* to Christ who had already arrived thither.

The passage to which we have already adverted, which affirms that the way into the holiest of all was not made

manifest during the continuance of the first tabernacle, merits attentive consideration. From this and other similar passages, many of the fathers were led to infer that the souls of departed saints were not immediately received at death into the beatific vision, but waited for their future crowns till the general resurrection, while some of them were permitted to accompany our Saviour at his ascension, as trophies of his victory over the last enemy. As this is a notion which, it is probable, few at present will be disposed to embrace, so it was the necessary result of interpreting the words in too absolute a sense, and of transferring to the *objects themselves* what may with more propriety be referred to the *conception* entertained of those objects. Chrysostom paraphrases the text by remarking, that the way into the holiest, or into heaven, was (ἄδατος) inaccessible: St. Paul merely affirms that it was not made manifest. Distinct from these two interpretations it seems impossible to find a third: the words must either intend that the way itself was not opened, or that the knowledge of it was not communicated, which is equivalent to asserting that the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ was reserved to be developed in a future day.

If the justice of these observations be admitted, the situation of Jewish believers will appear indeed to have been far removed from that of christians, and the gospel dispensation will derive a prodigious accession of splendour from the comparison. It will be seen that they were "shut up," to use the language of inspiration, unto the faith to be revealed, that their state was comparatively gloomy, though not hopeless; and that they were upheld by general assurances of divine mercy, confirmed by the acceptance of their offerings; while they possessed no clear and distinct conception of the way in which it would be displayed, or by what expedient its exercise could be rendered consistent with the immutable holiness and justice of the divine nature.

"Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras."

Led by a way that they knew not, the obscurity with

which they were surrounded must often have dismayed them; while the perturbations of conscience, on every recurrence of guilt, would clothe the last enemy with new terrors, and deepen the shades which invest the sepulchre. Hence arose that language of despondency uttered by Hezekiah, David, and others in the prospect of dissolution, together with the gloomy pictures which they frequently draw of the regions beyond the grave, natural to such as were "all their life, through fear of death, subject to bondage." Exposed to danger from which they knew no definite mode of escape, and placed on the confines of an eternity feebly and faintly illuminated, they had no other resource besides an *implicit* confidence in mysterious mercy.

But notwithstanding the extreme imperfection of their views, inasmuch as they *cordially* embraced the promises of God in the proportion in which they were then propounded, and cherished the expectation of a great Deliverer in the person of the Messiah, they possessed the spirit of faith. Genuine faith, considered as a principle, is characterized, not so much by the particular truths which it embraces, as by its origin, its nature, and its effects. When St. Paul describes the faith by which the elders obtained a good report, he refers not to the mysteries of the gospel, but specifies the persuasion that the worlds were made, or created, by the word of God, in opposition to the opinion that they were formed out of preexistent matter, which universally prevailed in pagan philosophy. He also enumerates, among its legitimate objects, the belief "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of such as diligently seek him;" and whoever examines with attention the various examples which he adduces of the operation of that principle, must be convinced that the idea of a vicarious propitiation is not absolutely essential to its nature, however necessary to salvation it has become, in consequence of the clear revelation of that doctrine.

Here, then, in all probability, consists the peculiar glory of the gospel, in contradistinction from the economy of Moses, that it deciphers the figures of the law,

accomplishes and absorbs every purpose of its sacrifices, and dispels the obscurity which concealed eternal realities, by placing in a refulgent light that great mystery, hid from ages and generations, "by which God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Thus the rigour and reserve which, under the ancient economy, generated a spirit of bondage, is exchanged for the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But it is time to return from this digression, which, though not totally irrelevant to the subject, has diverted the author's attention longer than he intended from the writer of the *Plea*.

III. In my former treatise, the omission of the name of Christ in the baptism of John was urged in proof of its being distinct from the christian ordinance; on the contrary, in the total absence of scriptural evidence, my opponent contends that he not only baptized in the name of Jesus, but also in that of the Holy Trinity. Supposing such to have been the fact, upon what principle can we account for the silence of the sacred writer on so important a particular? for that it was important, and would have contributed more to elucidate the nature and extent of his mission than all the circumstances combined which they have thought fit to record, will scarcely be denied. What similar example occurs in the whole series of scripture history, of a minute and detailed account of a religious ceremony, in which the mention of its most essential feature is suppressed; or who will believe, that while the minutest particulars respecting John were deemed worthy of being recorded, one so remarkable and unprecedented as that of his baptizing in the name of the Trinity was too trivial to be mentioned? a circumstance of much greater moment, surely, than his subsisting on locusts, or his being clothed with a girdle. But beside the silence of scripture, which might of itself be deemed sufficiently decisive, the inconsistency of such a proceeding, with the known reserve our Lord uniformly maintained respecting his Messiahship, and his repeated charges to his disciples not to publish that fact, demonstrate the extreme improbability

of his suffering himself to become the avowed object of a religious rite. The employment of his name for *such* a purpose, it is obvious, was equivalent to a public declaration of his being the Messiah, and must have defeated his known intention. In the publication *On Terms of Communion*, this argument was repeatedly insisted on, and pursued to such an extent of illustration, that we should have supposed it impossible it could either be misunderstood or misrepresented. What is the reply of the author of the *Plea* to this argument? One of the most extraordinary in the annals of controversy: it is neither more nor less than this, that though our Lord frequently enjoined secrecy as to the dignity of his divine character and the immediate object of his mission, there is not a single instance in which he manifested any delicacy as to his name.* He afterwards proceeds to tell us, with great gravity, that his name Jesus was as well known as that of Peter and John, and that he was addressed under that name equally by friends, enemies, and strangers. My reluctance to inflame this controversy with the language of exacerbation, reduces me, on this occasion, to a perplexity how to express myself. Is it possible, let me ask, he could so far mistake the scope and bearing of the reasoning, as to confound the use of the term Jesus, as the proper name by which he was addressed in the ordinary intercourse of life, with the employment of it, with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, in a holy sacrament? Or will he contend, that to call a person by the name of Jesus, or by any other appellation whatever, is precisely the same thing as to baptize in his name? He who is capable of confounding things so essentially distinct, is beyond the reach of reasoning: and if he did not confound them, but wished to put the change upon his readers, from a despair of being able to answer the argument, he has evinced a want of candour and good faith that merits the severest animadversion. Had his publication been a tissue of nonsense and stupidity throughout, we should have been strongly inclined to the former supposition; but when

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 27.

we reflect on the shrewdness which it occasionally displays, joined to his care not to glance, in the slightest manner, at the true hinge of the controversy, it is difficult not to suspect the latter. It may be questioned whether another person could have been found, acquainted with the English language, but would have instantly perceived that it was not the author's intention to insinuate a reluctance in our Lord to divulge his name, but the *fact* of his being the Messiah; and that it was the inseparable connexion of that fact with the practice of baptizing in his name, which was the ground of my objection. As he has not made the slightest attempt to solve the difficulty, it would be trifling with the patience of the reader to attempt to re-enforce it.

IV. The different effects which accompanied baptism, when performed by the apostles, and by John, were urged as a decisive proof that the two baptisms were essentially distinct, and characteristic of separate economies. To such a distinction our attention is invited by the forerunner, who affirmed himself to baptize in water only, but that "he that came after him should baptize in the Holy Ghost, and in fire." To this the author of the *Plea* replies, by remarking, "that the argument proceeds on incorrect data: it appears to assume that water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Ghost are the same; or that the latter invariably followed the former. It will no doubt be regarded as a remarkable incident, that, in the midst of a zealous effort to separate between what is substantially the same, an attempt should be made to identify what is essentially different."*

After describing the baptism of the Holy Ghost as an effect which ordinarily accompanied immersion in the name of Christ, it will be deemed much more remarkable that the author should be accused of confounding them, or that he should be affirmed to have *identified* two things which stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. If it be a fact that the communication of the Spirit usually accompanied the administration of baptism in the apostolic age, while no such communica-

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 29.

tion was annexed to the ceremony of John, the author's position is correct. In proof of this fact, we have only to consult the Acts of the Apostles, which record the history of the first promulgation of the gospel. We there perceive that St. Peter held out the promise of the Spirit to the people, as a principal inducement to submit to the baptismal sacrament; and that when St. Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus, who, though baptized, had not heard of those supernatural endowments, he expressed his surprise, saying, "Into what then were ye baptized?" a question totally irrelevant, but upon the supposition that the reception of miraculous gifts was the stated appendage to that ordinance.

The only inquiry which can possibly arise on this subject is, whether John, in foretelling that the Messiah should baptize with the Holy Ghost, intended to allude to the sacramental water, or whether his attention was directed solely to the effusion of the Spirit, without reference to the external rite. This question, however, admits of easy decision, when we recollect that the corporeal rite was the usual preparative for the reception of spiritual gifts, that they were announced in immediate connexion with the act of baptizing, and that, though the ancient prophets almost universally foretold the abundant effusion of spiritual gifts and graces, which succeeded the advent of the Messiah, none before John made use of a figure, which, viewed apart from the visible action with which it was associated, would have been scarcely intelligible. His suppression of the mention of *water* is in perfect accordance with the genius of oriental speech, which, in the exhibition of a complex object, is wont to represent it only by its boldest and most impressive feature.

It is not necessary to the support of this reasoning, to assert that the communication of miraculous gifts *invariably* accompanied baptism: it is quite sufficient to account for the language of John, as well as to sustain the inference deduced from it, that such was the *stated* order. The instance of the Samaritans recorded in the eighth of the Acts, is urged as an exception, but when attentively

examined, it is none. We are informed, indeed, that though they were already baptized, "the Holy Ghost was fallen upon none of them;" not, however, because the gift of the Spirit did not usually accompany the administration of that rite, but because the apostles, to whom alone the power of conferring it belonged, were not present. The case of the apostles themselves, and of Cornelius, it is admitted, may be considered as exceptions. In the former instance the outward ceremony was superseded, as we apprehend, partly by the previous baptism of the Spirit, and partly by their having been converted to christianity before the institution of that rite. In the latter, there was merely an inversion of the usual order: the Spirit was given prior to the administration of baptism, instead of succeeding it; but still they were closely conjoined in point of time, and sufficiently connected to justify the language of John.

To relieve the tediousness of the present discussion, let me here present the reader with a sample of the author's logic: "If these supernatural effects," he triumphantly remarks, "are invariably to follow immersion in water, in order to demonstrate that this is really christian baptism, how is it they were copiously enjoyed by some who are supposed never to have received this institution?"* By an argument precisely similar, it were easy to demonstrate that the possession of reason is no essential ingredient in the constitution of human nature. For it might with equal propriety be urged, if such a principle enters necessarily into the definition of human nature, how is it that it is copiously enjoyed by beings (angels for example) who are supposed never to have received such a nature? This reply may be deemed amply sufficient for such a mode of reasoning: but in addition to this, let it be observed, that it was neither asserted nor insinuated, that miraculous gifts are invariably requisite to constitute christian baptism; but simply that the fact of their accompanying it, when performed by the apostles, was held up by John as a striking feature in

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 30.

the new dispensation. And where is the absurdity of admitting that, without contending for its perpetuity, miraculous gifts sufficiently marked the *transition* from one economy to another; or that it is a peculiarity worthy of mention among the characteristics of a period, denominated, in distinction from every preceding one, the dispensation of the Spirit?

V. Apprehensive of fatiguing the attention of the reader, we hasten to the last particular connected with this branch of the controversy, which is the decisive proof of the truth of my hypothesis, resulting from the fact, that the disciples of John were *baptized* by St. Paul. As the author of the *Plea*, however, finds it necessary to contradict it, it will be proper to quote the whole passage, as it stands in the common translation, the accuracy of which no critic has impeached:—And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."* In examining this passage, with a view to the inquiry whether these men were baptized by St. Paul, or not, it is the fifth verse which especially claims our attention. The question turns entirely on the interpretation of the following words:—"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." These words must be understood either as the language of St. Paul, or of Luke the historian. Our opponents

* Acts xix. 1—6.

contend that they are to be understood as a continuance of St. Paul's address, in which he describes the nature and effects of John's baptism. Upon this interpretation the passage last quoted has no relation to the disciples at Ephesus, except as it was intended for their instruction; it is descriptive, not of what befell those disciples, but of the general submission of the Jewish people to the rite administered by John. And as it is asserted in the next verse that St. Paul laid his hands upon *them*, and they received the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, we are led to a most extraordinary paradox, the assertion that St. Paul actually laid his hands, not on the persons mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph, but, on that part of the Jewish people at large, who had been baptized by John, to whom he also communicated prophetic gifts. But as this proposition is too hard even for the powerful digestion of our opponents, they are compelled to adopt another expedient, which is to separate the relative pronouns in the last verse, and refer them, not to their immediate antecedent, but to a very remote one, at the distance of several verses. The only apology they make for this strange perversion of the language of inspiration is, that such interruptions of continuity are not uncommon, whereas we challenge them to produce a single instance of such a construction, not merely in the New Testament, but in the whole compass of Greek literature. Examples may possibly be adduced, where the relative pronoun is connected with an antecedent equally remote, but none, most assuredly, where its relation to an immediate antecedent is so obvious, and so natural, that the true interpretation in opposition to that which presents itself at first sight becomes a perfect enigma. Were there difficulties arising on each side, we might be induced to acquiesce in a construction, which, however unnatural or unusual, suggested the only consistent sense; but to have recourse to such a contrivance merely to avoid that construction, which is recommended by every rule of grammar, and against which not a shadow of objection lies, except its repugnance to hypothesis, is a proceeding at which liberal criticism must blush. If

such a mode of expounding scripture were adopted on other occasions, it is difficult to say what absurdity might not be obtruded on the sacred volume. The manner in which the author of the *Plea* criticises the passage, is such as might be expected from the advocate of so hopeless a cause. He neither ventures to quote it, nor to make the slightest remark on its principal clauses; but contents himself with putting a speech into the mouth of St. Paul, in which every thing runs perfectly smooth and easy; and since it is much easier to make speeches than to elucidate difficulties, or establish paradoxes, we commend his policy. His only remaining effort is confined to the introduction of a parallel passage; but unfortunately it turns out that his pretended parallel affords an example of as plain and obvious a construction of words as is to be found in the sacred pages. It is a passage which, instead of presenting a choice of difficulties, difficulties of *his* kind I mean, where grammar is on one side, and hypothesis on the other, suggests a sense in which all mankind have acquiesced—a sense which no degree of stupidity can miss, or artifice evade.* The only resemblance it bears to the portion of history under consideration is, that it relates a similar incident, where certain persons who had been baptized had not yet received the gifts of the Holy Ghost. To attempt the defence of a most unnatural interpretation of Greek words, not by an appeal to a passage which exhibits a similar peculiarity of construction, but merely a similarity of occurrence, is egregious trifling.

To the argument founded on the extreme improbability that none of the numerous converts on the day of Pentecost were previously disciples of John, no reply is attempted.

I cannot dismiss this subject without noticing the extreme deficiency of information respecting the history of religious opinions this author evinces, when he stigmatizes the sentiments advanced, as a modern theory. They are so far from meriting that reproach, that they boast the suffrages of all the fathers, without exception, who have touched upon the subject; nor would it be easy to discover a single divine, previous to the reformation, by whom they were not embraced; and, since that period, they have received the sanction of Grotius, Hammond, Whitby, Doddridge, Chillingworth, and a multitude of other names of nearly equal celebrity. On an accurate inquiry, it will probably be found that the absurd interpretation of the passage we have just been considering, which is so necessary to the support of the opposite hypothesis, originated in the horror excited at the conduct of the anabaptists at Munster, by which certain divines of the reformation felt themselves strongly disposed to shun whatever might bear the semblance or colour of anabaptism; that, in short, the doctrine here advanced is the revival of an ancient, rather than the invention of a new opinion.

To the sincere inquirer, the antiquity or the novelty of a doctrine will appear a consideration of little moment, compared to the evidence by which it is supported; yet, as a natural prejudice exists against violent departures from the ancient course of interpretation, it is but just to endeavour, as much as possible, to disengage the cause of truth from this incumbrance.

The author of the *Plea* expresses a sort of horror at the thought of a plurality of baptisms, forgetting, it should seem, that the doctrine of *baptisms*, in the plural number, is placed by St. Paul amongst the first principles of the oracles of God. It is difficult to conceive to what baptisms he could refer, except those which are the subject of the present discussion. The baptism of the Spirit, which was the highest gift of God, could with little propriety be termed a doctrine, much less enumerated among the first principles of christianity; and the Jewish washings constituted no part of that system.

Having presented the reasons on which the baptism of

* This wonder-working passage is as follows: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts viii. 14—17.

John was affirmed to be essentially distinct from the christian ordinance, at so much length, it is high time to relieve the attention of the reader, by dismissing the subject.

There is one more observation, and one only, to which the author requests his attention. If we admit that the Jewish people were baptized in the name of Christ, considering the prodigious multitudes who repaired to John for that purpose, the conduct of a great part of that nation must be viewed in a new light; and instead of being chargeable with a uniform rejection of the Messiah, they must be considered as *apostates;* upon this supposition, they violated the most sacred engagements, and impiously crucified their Prince, after consecrating themselves to his service by the most awful solemnities. The evangelist informs us that "he came to his own, but his own received him not;" but the more accurate statement would have been, that they first received and afterwards rejected him; received him on the testimony of the forerunner, and rejected him after witnessing the immaculate purity of his life, the wisdom of his discourses, and the splendour of his miracles.

There is attached to apostacy a character of perfidy and baseness peculiar to itself—a species of guilt which the inspired writers frequently paint in the darkest colours: yet, strange to tell! though they had no motives to conceal or palliate the conduct of their countrymen in their treatment of the Messiah, but many motives to the contrary, not a syllable escapes them of the charge of apostacy. What terrible energy would that accusation have lent to St. Peter's address! What unspeakable advantage for alarming their consciences would he have derived from reminding them of their baptismal vows, and of their unspeakable impiety in crucifying the divine person to whom they had previously dedicated themselves in solemn rites of religion. When St. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, gives loose to one of his finest bursts of indignant feeling and rapid eloquence, in a brief portraiture of the character of his countrymen, the circumstance which would have given incredible

force to the picture is suppressed; and not having perused the author of the *Plea*, he seems to entertain no suspicion of their having been baptized in the name of Jesus. It is not less unaccountable, that the ancient prophets contain no allusion to this event, but describe the future rejection of the Messiah as coeval with his appearance; and that the most singular fact in sacred history is neither the subject of narration nor of prophecy, but was reserved for the detection of the nineteenth century.

Having replied to this anonymous writer on every particular connected with the baptism of John, it is unnecessary to trouble the reader by animadverting on the other parts of his performance: the few observations it contains which are pertinent to the subject, are too loose and superficial to deserve attention, especially since a work is announced by a writer, who will probably discuss the remaining topics with superior ability. We shall notice only two circumstances, illustrative of the author's management of the controversy. He devotes his first section to a synopsis of the principles advanced in the treatise *On Terms of Communion*, which he has extended to the number of fourteen. Several of these, disguised by a little variety of language, are identically the same; some grossly misrepresented; and all of them expressed, not in the terms of the author, but in such as are adapted to give them as much of the air of paradox as possible. It is obvious that he who wishes to judge of them fairly, must view them in their proper place, accompanied with their respective proofs and illustrations; and that to tear them from their connexion, and exhibit them in a naked form, though they had been expressed in the author's own terms, is a direct appeal to prejudice. The obvious design is to deter the reader at the outset, and to dispose him to prejudge the cause before it is heard. To mingle in the course of a controversy insinuations and inuendos, which have no other tendency than to impair the impartiality of the reader, is too common an artifice; but such an open barefaced appeal to popular prejudice is of rare occurrence, It is an expedient to which no man will condescend, who is conscious of possessing su-

perior resources. To this part of his performance no reply will be expected; for though the author feels himself fully equal to the task of answering his opponent, he confesses himself quite at a loss to answer himself. Like a certain animal in the eastern part of the world, who is reported to be extremely fond of climbing a tree for that purpose, he merely pelts the author with his own produce.*

Another charge, however, is adduced, of more serious import. For presuming to speak of conditions of salvation, he is accused of employing anti-evangelical language, and suspicions of his orthodoxy are pretty broadly insinuated. When the term *conditions* of salvation, or words of similar import, are employed, he wishes it once for all to be clearly understood, that he utterly disclaims the notion of *meritorious* conditions, and that he intends by that term only what is necessary in the established order of means, a *sine qua non*, that without which another thing cannot take place. When thus defined, to deny there are conditions of salvation, is not to *approach* to antinomianism merely, it is to fall into the gulf. It is nothing less than a repeal of all the sanctions of revelation, of all the principles of moral government. Let the idea of *conditional* salvation, in the sense already explained, be steadily rejected along with the term, and the patrons of the worst of heresies will have nothing further to demand. That repentance, faith, and their fruits in a holy life, supposing life to be continued, are essential prerequisites to eternal happiness, is a doctrine inscribed, as with a sunbeam, in every page of revelation; and must we, in deference to the propagators of an epidemic pestilence, be doomed to express, by obscure and feeble circumlocutions, a truth which one word will convey, especially when that word, or others of a precisely similar meaning, has been current in the productions of unquestionable orthodoxy and piety in every

* As this allusion has been much misrepresented, I may be permitted to remark, that it is simply to the practice of monkeys adroitly to catch and throw back again, the sticks, stones, and other substances that are cast at them.—Ed.

age? The author is at a loss to conceive on what principle, or for what reason, dangerous concessions are due to antinomianism; that thick-skinned monster of the ooze and the mire, which no weapon can pierce, no discipline can tame. If it be replied, why adhere to an offensive term, when its meaning may be expressed in other words, or at least, by a more circuitous mode of expression? the obvious answer is, that words and ideas are closely associated; and that, though ideas give birth to terms, appropriate terms become, in their turn, the surest safeguard of ideas; insomuch that a truth, which is never announced but in a circuitous and circumlocutory form, will either have no hold, or a very feeble one, on the public mind. The anxiety with which the precise, the appropriate term is avoided, bespeaks a shrinking, a timidity, a distrust, with relation to the idea conveyed by it, which will be interpreted as equivalent to its disavowal. While antinomianism is making such rapid strides through the land, and has already convulsed and disorganized so many of our churches, it is not the season for half measures; danger is to be repelled by intrepid resistance, by stern defiance, not by compliances and concessions; it is to be opposed, if opposed successfully, by a return to the wholesome dialect of purer times. Such is the intimate alliance betwixt words and things, that the solicitude with which the term *condition*, and others of similar import, have been avoided by some excellent men, has contributed, more than a little, to the growth of this wide-spreading pestilence. As almost every age of the church is marked by its appropriate visitation of error, so, little penetration is requisite to perceive that antinomianism is the epidemic malady of the present, and that it is an evil of gigantic size and deadly malignity. It is qualified for mischief by the very properties which might seem to render it merely an object of contempt—its vulgarity of conception, its paucity of ideas, its determined hostility to taste, science, and letters. It includes, within a compass which every head can contain, and every tongue can utter, a system which cancels every moral tie, consigns the whole human race

to the extremes of presumption or despair, erects religion on the ruins of morality, and imparts to the dregs of stupidity all the powers of the most active poison. The author will ever feel himself honoured by whatever censures he may incur through his determined opposition to such a system.

A REPLY

TO

THE REV. JOSEPH KINGHORN:

BEING

A FURTHER VINDICATION OF THE PRACTICE

OF

FREE COMMUNION.

"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God?" —Acts xi. 17.

[PUBLISHED IN 1818.]

PREFACE.

After announcing an intention of replying to Mr. Kinghorn, the public seem entitled to some account of the causes which have delayed the reply so long. Various conjectures have probably arisen on the subject. By many, no doubt, it has been suspected that the delay was occasioned by a perception of the difficulty of constructing an answer which would be deemed satisfactory, and that the engagement to reply was made, without anticipating so formidable an opposition. That the author was, to a certain extent, deterred by a feeling of difficulty, it is impossible to deny; but the reader is probably not aware in what the difficulty lay. It had no relation to the argumentative force of Mr. Kinghorn's production, in whatever degree it may be supposed to possess that attribute, but solely to the manner in which he has chosen to conduct the debate. The perpetual recurrence of the same matter, the paucity of distinct and intelligible topics of argument, together with an obvious want of coherence, and of dependence of one part on another, give to the whole the air of a series of skirmishing and desultory attacks, rather than of regular combat; rendering it difficult to impart that order and continuity to a reply, in the absence of which, argumentative discussions are insufferably tedious. With the eagerness of a professed pleader, he has availed himself of every topic which could afford the slightest colour of support to his cause, with little scrupulosity, apparently, respecting the soundness of the principles from which he argues. In a word, he has conducted his share of the warfare in a manner which renders him

more formidable from the irregularity and quickness of his movements, than from the steady pressure of his columns.

Though he has advanced some new, and as they appear to me, paradoxical positions, the space which they occupy is so small, compared to that which he has allotted to arguments and objections distinctly noticed and replied to in my former treatise, that it seemed almost impracticable to answer the greater part of the work, without a frequent recurrence to what had been already advanced. But a writer is never more certain of disgusting than when he is the echo of himself.

On these accounts, had my private conviction dictated the course which it seemed proper to pursue, the following work, instead of swelling to its present bulk, would have been limited to some short strictures on those parts of his reply in which my respectable opponent has quitted the track of his predecessors. But to this there were serious objections. In the estimation of multitudes, little qualified to appreciate the weight of an argument, to be brief and to be superficial, are one and the same thing: no publication is admitted to be solidly answered, except the reply bears a certain proportion to it in size and extent; and whatever is not distinctly noticed and discussed, however irrelevant, or however trivial, is instantly proclaimed unanswerable. These considerations determined me rather to hazard the imputation of tediousness, than to attempt a very concise reply, which, however cogent, would be construed by many into a tacit acknowledgement of my incapacity to combat the reasoning of my opponent. Having, therefore, only a choice of evils, and necessitated either to make a large demand on the patience of the reader, or to incur the suspicion of evading what could not be successfully encountered, I preferred the former; endeavouring at the same time to shun, as much as possible, a tiresome repetition of the same topics; with what success, the public will determine.

The preceding remarks will explain one cause of delay: to which may be added, a strong disinclination

to controversy, the want of a habit of composition, repeated attacks of illness at one period, and various avocations and engagements at another, too unimportant to be obtruded on the attention of the reader.

It may also be remarked, in extenuation of the charge of procrastination, that the subject is just as interesting and important as when the controversy commenced. The evil in which it originates is not local, nor of an ephemeral or transitory nature: it will continue to subsist, there is reason to fear, after the present generation is consigned to the dust; and even the delay may not be altogether without its advantages. Both parties will have had leisure to reflect, the reasoning on each side of the question time to settle, and to find its level in the public mind, undisturbed by that disposition extravagantly to depreciate and to extol respectively the performances it has given rise to, which almost invariably distinguishes the outset of a controversy. Whatever appears in the present stage, it is but justice to consider as the result of more matured observation and inquiry, compensating in pertinence and solidity what it may want in vivacity and ardour.

It is remarkable that without any previous knowledge or concert, a discussion on the subject of communion commenced nearly at the same time on both sides the Atlantic; and the celebrated Dr. Mason, of New York, justly regarded as one of the brightest ornaments of the western hemisphere, was exerting the energies of his most powerful mind in establishing the fundamental position of the treatise *On Terms of Communion* almost at the very moment that treatise appeared. A coincidence so rare, a movement so simultaneous, yet so unpremeditated, we cannot but look upon as a token for good, as an indication of the approach of that period, so ardently desired by every enlightened christian, when genuine believers will again be of "one heart and of one mind." Let us hope that America, the land of freedom, where our pious ancestors found an asylum from the oppression of intolerance, will exert, under the auspices of such men as Dr. Mason, a powerful reaction on the

parent state, and aid her emancipation from the relics of that pestilential evil, still cherished and retained in too many British churches.

Independent of other considerations, that invaluable person possesses one obvious advantage over the author of the following performance. Disengaged from the spurious refinements and perplexing subtleties which arise from the subject of baptism, by which our opponents attempt to evade the application of his general principle, his movements are in consequence more free and unfettered, and his force operates in a more simple direction than is compatible with the state of the question, as it respects the views of the baptist denomination. He fearlessly spreads his sails to the winds, and triumphs on the element which is congenial to the amplitude and grandeur of his mind. Mine is a coasting voyage, in which the author feels himself necessitated to creep along the shore, and to comply with all its irregularities, in the midst of flats and shoals, and exposed to perpetual annoyance from the innumerable small craft which infest these shallow waters. The effect of the different situations in which we are placed, is to give a luminous simplicity to his mode of conducting the argument, which forms a striking contrast, not only to the tedious logomachies which I have been compelled to encounter,* but to the manner in which I have attempted to confute them. It belongs to a Pascal, and perhaps to a few others of the same order of genius, to invest the severest logic with the charms of the most beautiful composition, and to render the most profound argumentation as entertaining as a romance. The author makes no such pretension: having confined his endeavours to an attempt to establish his assertions by sufficient proof, and to expose the sophistry of his opponent, he must be allowed to remind his readers that no quality will be found more

* Though Dr. Mason was not led by the course of his argument to treat of the question of *mixed communion*, in the usual import of that phrase, his general principle not only necessarily infers it, but I have had the satisfaction of learning from his own lips his entire approbation of the doctrine advanced in *Terms of Communion*.

necessary than patience. Truth, as far as he knows himself, is his sole object; and if they are actuated by the same disposition, though they will find little to amuse, it is possible they may meet with something to instruct them.

It is surprising how little attention an inquiry into the principles which ought to regulate our intercourse with other denominations, (a question of considerable moment, in whatever light it be viewed,) has excited. Though it has given birth to a few publications, at very distant intervals, none, as far as my information extends, have produced any deep impression, or any extensive and permanent effects. On this subject, a spirit of slumber seems to have oppressed our faculties, from which we have hardly ever completely awoke. From the appearance of Mr. Bunyan's treatise, entitled *Water Baptism no Bar to Communion*, to the publication of the celebrated Mr. Robinson, a whole century elapsed, with few or no efforts to check the progress of the prevailing system, which had gained so firm a footing previous to Mr. Booth's writing, that he felt no scruple in entitling his defence of that practice, *An Apology for the Baptists*. The majority appear to have carried it with so high a hand, that the few churches who ventured to depart from the established usage were very equivocally acknowledged to belong to the general body, and seem to have been content to purchase peace at the price of silence and submission. The most virulent reproaches were cast upon the admirable Bunyan, during his own time, for presuming to break the yoke; and whoever impartially examines the spirit of Mr. Booth's Apology, will perceive that its venerable author regards him, together with his coadjutors and successors, much in the light of rebels and insurgents; or, to use the mildest terms, as contumacious despisers of legitimate authority. Mr. Kinghorn, in the same spirit, evinces an eagerness, at every turn, to dispute our title to be considered as complete baptists. In short, whether it is to be ascribed to intimidation, or to some other cause, the fact is notorious that the zeal evinced on the side of free communion, has

hitherto borne no proportion to that which impels the advocates of the opposite system, whose treatment of their opponents, in most instances, bears no very remote resemblance to that which moderate churchmen are accustomed to receive at the hands of their high church brethren.

Another cause has probably cooperated towards the same result. Some, whose character commands the highest respect, are known to deprecate the agitation of the present controversy, from an apprehension of the injury the denomination may sustain, by the exposure of its intestine dissensions. For my own part, I am at a loss to conceive the grounds on which such a policy can be justified. Could the fact, that we are at variance among ourselves on the subject under discussion, be concealed, something might be urged in favour of the prudence of such a measure; nothing, certainly for its magnanimity. But since that is impossible, and whoever is acquainted with the state of the denomination, is aware of the diversity which subsists in the constitution of our churches in this particular, the true state of the question is, whether that article of the Apostles' Creed which asserts *the communion of saints*, is to be merged in an exclusive zeal for baptism, and its systematic violation, in our judgement at least, to remain unnoticed and unchecked, in deference to party feelings and interests. We are at a loss to conceive how the association of truth with error is capable of benefiting the former; or how it can be eventually injured by an attempt (conducted in a christian spirit) to dissolve an alliance which resembles the junction of the living with the dead. While the preservation of peace is dear to us, the interests of truth are still more so; and we would fix our eyes on the order in which the attributes of that celestial wisdom are enumerated, which is "*first* pure, then peaceable."

Before closing this Preface, I must be allowed to advert to a circumstance intimately connected with the eventual success of the cause in which I am embarked. It is the general practice of our churches, whatever may be the sentiments of the majority, to continue the practice of strict communion, in almost every instance where the opposite system is incapable of being introduced with a perfect unanimity; in consequence of which, it frequently happens that the constitution of the church continues to sanction strict communion, while the sentiments of a vast majority of its members are decidedly in favour of a contrary system; and, in opposition to the usage which obtains on other occasions, the private sentiments of the few, are made to regulate and control the conduct of the many. Where, it may be asked, is the propriety, where the justice, of such a mode of proceeding? Whatever respect may be due to the conscientious, though erroneous, scruples of an upright mind, it is not easy to perceive why these should be permitted to prescribe to the better judgement of those whom *we* must necessarily consider as more enlightened.

As the majority, convinced, as they are supposed to be, of the right of all genuine christians to communion, must necessarily regard the dissentients as being in error, it deserves to be considered in what manner error ought to be treated. Ought it to be the object of toleration, or should it be invested with dominion? Surely all it can reasonably claim is the former; but when, in deference to it, the far greater part of a society refrain from acting agreeably to their avowed principles, and consent to withhold, from another class of their fellow-christians, what they consider as their undoubted right, they cannot be said merely to tolerate the error in question; no, they in reality place it on the throne—they prostrate themselves before it. Yet, strange as it may appear, such is at present the conduct of the baptist societies. While there remains the smallest scantling of members averse to open communion, the doors, in compliance with their scruples, continue shut, and pædobaptist candidates, however excellent, or however numerous, are excluded.

Thus the intolerance of one class of christians is not only indulged, but pampered and caressed, while the religious profession of another is treated as a nullity. The incongruity of this mode of proceeding is also ex-

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Thus the intolerance of one class of christians is not only indulged, but pampered and caressed, while the religious profession of another is treated as a nullity. The incongruity of this mode of proceeding is also ex-

tremely obvious in another view. The admission of members in our societies, it is well known, is determined by a majority of suffrages, where the minority is expected, and that most reasonably, quietly to acquiesce in the decision of the majority. But in the case under present consideration, where strict communion is practised in a church, the majority of whose members are of a contrary persuasion, the eligibility, not of an individual, but of a whole class of individuals, to an indefinite extent, is virtually determined by the judgement of the smaller, in opposition to the larger party.

The injustice of such an arrangement will, perhaps, be admitted; but how, it will be asked, can it be remedied? Would it be proper to exclude such as feel it impossible, with a good conscience, to commune with pædobaptists, in order to make room for the latter? Nothing is more remote from our intention. Without inflicting the slightest wound on those amiable and exemplary persons who scruple the lawfulness of that measure, the remedy appears equally simple and obvious.

Whenever there is a decided majority in a church, whose views are in unison with those which we are attempting to recommend, let them throw down the barriers, and admit pious pædobaptists without hesitation; and let those whose principles deter them from joining in such a communion, receive the Lord's supper apart, retaining, at the same time, all their rights and privileges unimpaired. By this simple expedient, the views of all the parties will be met; the majority will exert their prerogative, and act consistently with their avowed principles; the pædobaptists will obtain their rights; and the abettors of strict communion will enjoy that state of separation and seclusion which they covet. By this means, a silent revolution may be effected in our churches, unstained by a particle of violence or of injustice. But, while the present plan is pursued, while we are waiting for the last sands of intolerance to run out, the domination of error and injustice may be prolonged to an interminable period, since, of all creatures, bigotry is the most tenacious of life.

Sudden and violent reformations are not only seldom lasting, but the mischief which results, and the disgust they excite, often produce a reaction, which confirms and perpetuates the evil they attempt to eradicate. For this reason, great prudence and moderation are requisite in every effort to meliorate the state of public bodies. He who aspires to remove their prejudices, must treat them with tenderness and respect, urging them to no step for which they are not fully prepared, by a mature and widely extended conviction of its propriety; for no innovations, however desirable in themselves, will be permanently beneficial, the stability and perpetuity of which are not guaranteed by the previous illumination of those by whom they are adopted.

Having devoted more time and attention to the present controversy already, than many are disposed to think it entitled to, it is by no means my intention to renew it, conceiving it a contemptible ambition to determine to have the last word, which is nothing less than to aspire at a preeminence in pertinacity. Resting with perfect confidence on the truth, and, consequently, on the ultimate triumphs of the principles which I have attempted to defend, the detection of incidental mistakes, and the exposure of minor errors, will not disturb my repose, however justly they may awaken a feeling of regret that the powers of the advocate were not more commensurate with the merits of the cause.

If the author has been, on any occasion, betrayed, in the ardour of debate, into language which the reader may deem disrespectful to his opponent, it will give him real concern. He knows none whose character entitles him to higher esteem; nor is he insensible to the value of those expressions of personal regard with which Mr. Kinghorn has honoured him, nor of that general mildness and urbanity, which is at once the character of his mind and of his performance. Aware of the tendency of controversy to alienate the parties from each other, who engage in it, it is matter of regret, on that account, and on that only, that it was my lot to meet with an

antagonist in Mr. Kinghorn.* In every other respect it is a fortunate circumstance for the cause of truth; for while his temper affords a security from that virulence, and those personalities, which are the opprobrium of theological debate, his talents ensure his doing justice to his cause, perhaps beyond any other person of the same persuasion. A very different performance, in many respects, was anticipated, it is true; nor could the extraordinary assertions, not to say adventurous paradoxes, he has hazarded, fail to excite surprise; although his character exempts him from the suspicion of that arrogance and conceit, in which they usually originate. They are rather to be ascribed to a dissatisfaction (which he dares not pretend to conceal) with former apologists; and a determination, if possible, to compass the same object by a different route. The intelligent reader will probably be of opinion, that he has attempted to give an air of originality to what was not susceptible of it; and that, aiming to enrich and support a most meagre and barren thesis, by new arguments, he is reduced to the same necessity as the Israelites, that of "making bricks without straw."

Having already made the porch too large for the building, one additional remark only is submitted to the attention of the reader, previous to his entrance on the following discussion. The little success which has attended our exhibition of the doctrine of baptism, continued now for many generations, deserves the serious consideration of every intelligent baptist. With all our efforts, with all the advantage of overwhelming evidence, (as appears to me,) in favour of our sentiments, the prospects of their reception, (to say nothing of established churches, where there are peculiar impediments to be encountered,) the prospect of their reception by dissenting communities is as distant as ever: and it may be doubted whether, since the recent revival of religion, our progress is in a fair proportion to that of other denominations. It may be

* Mr. Kinghorn studied under Mr. Hall, at the Bristol Academy —Ed.

possible to assign the second causes of this remarkable event; but as second causes are always subservient to the intentions of the first, it deserves our serious consideration, whether we are not labouring under the sensible frown of the great Head of the church; and "is there not a cause?" A visible inferiority to other christians in zeal and piety will scarcely be imputed; nor have we been left destitute of that competent measure of learning and talent requisite to the support of our doctrines. The cause of our failure, then, is not to be looked for in that quarter. But though we have not "drank with the drunken," if we have unwittingly "beaten our fellow-servants," by assuming a dominion over their conscience; if we have severed ourselves from the members of Christ, and under pretence of preserving the purity of Christian ordinances, violated the christian spirit; if we have betrayed a lamentable want of that "love which is the fulfilling of the law," by denying a place in our churches to those who belong to the "church of the first-born," and straitening their avenue, till it has become narrower than the way to heaven; we may easily account for all that has followed, and have more occasion to be surprised at the compassionate Redeemer's bearing with our infirmities, than at his not bestowing a signal blessing on our labours.

PART I.

THE FUNDAMENTAL POSITION; OR THE SUPPOSED NECESSARY CONNEXION BETWEEN THE TWO POSITIVE INSTITUTES OF CHRISTIANITY EXAMINED.

CHAP. I.

Remarks on Mr. Kinghorn's Statement of the Controversy.

PERFECTLY concurring in opinion with Mr. Kinghorn, that it is of importance that the point in debate be fairly stated, a few remarks, designed to show in what respects his statement is inaccurate or defective, will not be deemed irrelevant. He justly observes that the question, and the only question, is, whether those who are *acknowledged to be unbaptized ought to come to the Lord's table.* After stating the sentiments of the pædobaptists, he proceeds to observe that the "baptists act on a different plan; they think that baptism ought to be administered to those only who profess repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that it should be administered to them on such profession by immersion. And then, and not before, they consider such persons properly qualified, according to the New Testament, for the reception of the Lord's supper." The last position, Mr. Kinghorn is aware, is not maintained by the baptists as such, but by part of them only: it may be doubted whether it be the sentiment of the majority. Why then identify the advocates of strict communion with the body, as though the abettors of a contrary practice were too inconsiderable to be mentioned, or were not entitled to be considered as baptists?

It is but just however to remark, that this disposition to enlarge the number of his partizans, is not peculiar to this writer. Mr. Booth, when engaged in defending a thesis, about which the baptists had long been divided, chose, in the same spirit, to denominate his performance *An Apology for the Baptists.**

Our author proceeds to observe, "Here arises a controversy between the two parties, not only respecting baptism, but also respecting their conduct to each other on the subject of communion." Where, let me ask, are the traces to be found of this imaginary controversy betwixt baptists and pædobaptists on that subject? That they have been often engaged in acrimonious disputes with each other on the point of baptism, is certain; but of the history of this strange debate about terms of communion, the public are totally ignorant. What are the names of the parties engaged, and to what publications did it give birth? This author had informed us at the distance of a few lines, that the pædobaptists in general believe that none ought to come to the Lord's table who are not baptized. If this is correct, we may indeed easily conceive of their being offended with us for deeming them unbaptized; but how our refusal to admit them to communion should become the subject of debate, is utterly mysterious. Did they, in contradiction to the fundamental laws of reasoning, attempt to persuade us to act in contradiction to the principles agreed upon by both parties? The supposition is impossible. The truth is—nor could the writer be ignorant of it—that the dispute respecting communion existed in our own denomination, and in that only.

An attempt is made to represent the advocates of mixed communion as divided among themselves, and as resting the vindication of their conduct on opposite grounds. In stating their views, Mr. Kinghorn observes, "that as their pædobaptist brethren think themselves

* Who would expect to find that a book, entitled *An Apology for the Baptists*, chiefly consists of a severe reprehension of the principles and practices of a respectable part of that body?

baptized, they are willing to admit them on that ground, since they do not object to baptism itself, but only differ from others in the circumstances of the ordinance."

"Some," he adds, "lay down a still wider principle, that baptism has no connexion with church communion; and that in forming a christian church, the question ought not to be, are these christians who wish to unite in church-fellowship *baptized*, whatever that term is considered as meaning—but are they, as far as we can judge, real christians?"*

Of this diversity in the mode of defending our practice, the writer of these pages confesses himself totally ignorant: and whatever prejudices our cause may sustain, it has not yet been injured by that which results from intestine dissension. Different modes of expression may have been adopted by different writers, but a perfect accordance of principle, a coincidence in the reasons alleged for our practice, has pervaded our apologies. We have not, like our opponents, professed to take new ground:† we have not constructed defences so totally dissimilar as the publications of a Booth and a Kinghorn, where the argument which is placed in the very front by the former, is by the latter abandoned as untenable. It is easy to perceive that the alleged disagreement in our principles is a mere phantom. While we universally maintain the nullity of infant baptism, the persuasion which our pædobaptist brethren entertain of their being baptized, can never be mistaken for baptism, and they, consequently, cannot be received in the character of baptized persons. Our constant practice of administering immersion to such, on a change of sentiment, would on that supposition convict us at once of being anabaptists. It is not, then, under any idea that they have really partaken of that ordinance, more than the people called quakers, that we admit them to our communion; but in

* Baptism a Term of Communion, pp. 11, 12.

† "The reader who is acquainted with the *Apology for the Baptists*, written by the late venerable Abraham Booth, will find that in the following pages I have taken ground somewhat different from his. I have adopted rather a different mode of defence."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 8.

the character of sincere though mistaken christians, who have evinced, even with respect to the particular in which we deem them erroneous, no disposition to treat a christian rite with levity or neglect; and if there are those who would refuse to commune with such as reject the ordinance altogether, it is because they suspect them of such a disposition. As there can be no degrees in nothing, they are not so weak as to suppose that one class is in reality more *baptized* than the other; but one is supposed to mistake the nature of an institute, which the other avowedly neglects. In this case, he who is prepared to believe that the omission of christian baptism, from a notion of its not being designed for perpetuity, may consist with that deference to divine authority which is essential to a christian, will receive both without hesitation: he who is incapable of extending his candour so far, will make a distinction: he will admit the pædobaptist, while he rejects the person who purposely omits the ceremony altogether. Whichever measure we adopt, we act on the same principle, and merely apply it with more or less extent, according to the comprehension of our charity. If we supposed there were a necessary unalterable connexion between the two positive christian institutes, so that none were qualified for communion who had not been previously baptized, we could not hesitate for a moment respecting the refusal of pædobaptists, without renouncing the principles of our denomination. On the other hand, if among such as are supposed to be equally unbaptized, we admit some and reject others, this difference must be derived, not from the consideration of baptism, but of personal character; in other words, from our supposing ourselves to possess that evidence of the piety of the party accepted, which is deficient in the other. Hence it is manifest that nothing can be more simple and intelligible than the principles on which we proceed, which are of such a nature as to preclude every other diversity of opinion, except what regards their application in particular instances.

He who mistakes the nature of a positive institute, is in a different predicament of error from him who avow-

edly rejects it altogether; the imperfection which claims toleration in our pædobaptist brethren, is different in its nature from that which attaches to such as are disposed to set the ordinance aside. It is very possible therefore that some may be willing to extend their indulgence to what appears to them the *least* of two errors, while they refuse toleration to the greater, and, on this ground, admit a pædobaptist, while they scruple to receive him who does not even profess to be baptized. But in making such a distinction, no intelligent baptist would be moved by the consideration of one of these parties being baptized, and the other not, (for this would be admitting the validity of infant baptism,) but solely by the different estimate he made of the magnitude of the respective errors. Some would probably consider each of them consistent with a credible profession of christianity; others might form a less favourable judgement. In this case the parties would act differently, while they maintained the same principle, and adjusted their practice by the same rule.*

* The above remarks may enable the reader to judge of the justice with which Mr. Kinghorn asserts, or insinuates, our total disagreement respecting the fundamental principle on which we justify our practice. "Among the baptists," he says, "who plead for mixed communion, I apprehend few will be found who would fairly take Mr. Hall's principle in all its consequences. In general they palliate, and plead that many good men think themselves baptized, and they are willing to accept them on that footing, leaving it to their own consciences to decide whether they had received such baptism as the word of God required; and they will hardly admit the possibility of any case occurring which should require their acting on a wider principle. And here also, as far as my knowledge and observation have extended, I believe the cases are *very few* in which the position would be fairly and boldly adopted, that christian communion ought to be held with those who deny altogether the obligation to attend to christian baptism."—p. 15. My opportunities of knowing the sentiments of the liberal part of the baptists must be supposed to be at least equal to Mr. Kinghorn's; yet I have not heard a single objection from them against the general principle. Exceptions have been made (as might be expected) to particular parts, but none whatever to the fundamental position of the treatise. The reason he assigns for supposing that many would not adopt the general principle in its full extent, is inconclusive. To refuse the communion of such as denied the obligation of baptism altogether, providing that error was deemed of such magnitude as to induce a suspicion of the piety of the party, would not be to contradict the principle in the smallest degree; and I am persuaded that amongst the advocates of mixed communion the refusal would proceed on no other ground. It is one thing to reject a general principle, and another to differ about the application of it to particular cases.

It is somewhat extraordinary, that after stating the principle on which my Treatise on Communion was founded, Mr. Kinghorn makes his first appeal to the pædobaptists, and asks whether they are prepared to acknowledge that baptism and the Lord's supper have no connexion. To what purpose is a question referred to a class of persons, who, as far as concerns the interior regulation of their churches, have no interest in the inquiry; on whose practice it can have no influence, and who are supposed by both the parties concerned, to be in an error respecting the institution itself, which has given occasion to the discussion? The confidence with which he anticipates their favourable suffrage, appears however to be ill founded; and if the *Evangelical Magazine* for 1803 is supposed to have insinuated sentiments congenial with his own, the author of the review of the present controversy, in the same publication, distinctly and explicitly expressed his approbation of the treatise *On Terms of Communion.* I have no doubt the result of an accurate and extensive inquiry into the prevailing sentiments of such as adhere to infant baptism would be found opposed to his doctrine; and that such of them as might object to the admission of a member avowedly unbaptized, would be actuated by the consideration of the *magnitude of the error*, and not by the conviction of a specific and essential connexion betwixt the two ordinances in question. In other words, they would decide on the case upon principles common to the advocates of mixed communion.

His pretence for calling in such a host of disputants is that he may "clear the field," which, in my humble opinion, will be best accomplished by confining the debate within its proper limits; regarding it agreeably to its true nature, as a controversy which concerns our own denomination alone, without attempting to extort a verdict from persons who have not been placed in a

situation to invite their attention to the subject. Fortunately for them, they are under no temptation to treat their fellow-christians with indignity; whether they would have maintained the stern inflexibility which is prepared to sacrifice the communion of saints to an unfounded hypothesis, must be left to conjecture. We indulge a hope that they would have hesitated long ere they admitted a doctrine which draws after it such consequences; that they would have judged of the tree by its fruits, and have discovered some better mode of signalizing their allegiance to Christ, than by the excision of his members. The tenet to which we are opposed, produces an effect so contrary to what the genius of the gospel teaches us to anticipate, and so repugnant to the noblest feeling of the heart, as to form a presumption against it which nothing can surmount, but the utmost force and splendour of evidence. How far it is from possessing such support, or even that preponderance in the scale of argument which would produce conviction on the most trivial subject, it is the business of the following sheets to inquire.

In deciding the question, whether persons whom we deem unbaptized are entitled to approach the Lord's table, we must examine the connexion subsisting betwixt the two positive ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper.

Our opponents contend that there is *such a connexion* betwixt these as renders them inseparable; so that he who is deemed unbaptized, is, *ipso facto*, apart from any consideration whatever of the cause of that omission, disqualified for approaching the sacred elements. *We* contend that the absence of baptism may disqualify, and that it does disqualify, wherever it appears to proceed from a criminal motive; that is, wherever its neglect is accompanied with a conviction of its divine authority. In this case, we consider the piety of such a person at least doubtful; but when the omission proceeds from involuntary prejudice, or mistake, when the party evinces his conscientious adherence to known duty, by the general tenour of his conduct; we do not

consider the mere absence of baptism as a sufficient bar to communion. On this ground we cheerfully receive pious pædobaptists, not from the supposition that the ceremony which they underwent in their infancy possesses the smallest validity, but as sincere followers of Christ: and for my own part, I should feel as little hesitation in admitting such as deny the perpetuity of baptism, whenever the evidence of their piety is equally clear and decisive.

It is apparent that the whole controversy turns on the *connexion* betwixt the two positive institutes; and that in order to justify the conduct of our opponents, it is not sufficient to evince the authority or perpetuity of each, and the consequent obligation of attending to both: it is necessary to show the dependence of one upon the other; not merely that they are both clearly and unequivocally enjoined, but that the one is prescribed with a *view to the other*.

There are two methods by which we may suppose this to be effected; either by showing their inherent and intrinsic dependence, or by making it appear that they are connected by *positive law*. Betwixt ritual observances, it is seldom, if ever, possible to discover an inherent connexion; in the present case it will probably not be attempted. If the advocates of exclusive communion succeed, it must be in the last of these methods; it must be by proving, from express declarations of scripture, that baptism is an invariable and essential pre-requisite to communion. A Jew would have found no difficulty in establishing this fact respecting circumcision and the passover: he would have immediately pointed to the book of Exodus, where we find an express prohibition of an uncircumcised person from partaking of the paschal lamb. Let some similar evidence be adduced on the present subject—let some declaration from scripture be exhibited which distinctly prohibits the celebration of the Lord's supper by any person who, from a misconception of its nature, has omitted the baptismal ceremony, and the controversy will be at rest. The reader can scarcely be too often reminded

that this is the very hinge of the present debate, which, (as appears from the title of his pamphlet,) Mr. Fuller clearly perceived, however unsuccessful he may have been in establishing that fundamental position. Much that Mr. Kinghorn has advanced will be found to be totally irrelevant to the inquiry in hand; and in more instances than one, the intelligent reader will perceive him to have made concessions which are destructive of his cause. But let us proceed to a careful investigation of the arguments by which he attempts to establish the aforesaid *connexion*.

CHAP. II.

His Attempt to establish the Connexion contended for, from the Apostolic Commission and Primitive Precedent.

My respectable opponent commences this branch of the argument by quoting the apostolic commission, justly remarking, that whatever may be thought of John's baptism, the ceremony enjoined in that commission must belong, in the strictest sense, to the christian dispensation. The commission is as follows:—"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Or as it is recorded in Luke—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." "This," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "is the *law;* the Acts of the Apostles are a commentary on that law; not leaving us to collect from mere precedents what ought to be done, but showing us how the law was practically explained by those who perfectly understood it." He reminds us, "that in every instance where the history descends to particulars, we find they constantly adhered to this rule; and that

when they *taught*, and men believed, the apostles *baptized* them, and then further instructed them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

We are as ready to allow as Mr. Kinghorn, that baptism was enjoined by the apostolic commission; we are perfectly agreed with him respecting the *law* of baptism, and are accustomed to explain its nature, and enforce its authority, by the same arguments as he himself would employ. We have no controversy with him, or with his party, on the subject of baptism, considered apart from the Lord's supper; and, were he disputing with such as deny its original appointment, or its perpetuity, the passages he quotes would be fully to his purpose. But, where the inquiry turns, not on the nature or obligation of baptism, but on the *necessary dependence* of another institution upon it, we are at a loss to perceive in what manner the quotation applies to the question before us. To us it is inconceivable how any thing more is deducible from the *law* of baptism, than its present and perpetual obligation. The existence of a law establishes the obligation of a correspondent duty, and nothing more. The utmost efforts of ingenuity can extort no other inference from it, than that a portion of blame attaches to such as have neglected to comply with it, variable in its degree by an infinity of circumstances, too subtle to be ascertained, and too numerous to be recited. We feel no hesitation in avowing our belief that pædobaptists of all denominations have failed in a certain part of their duty; for this is a legitimate inference from the perpetuity of the baptismal ordinance, joined with our persuasion that we have interpreted it correctly. But if we are immediately to conclude from thence, that they are disqualified for christian communion, we must seek a church which consists of members who have failed in no branch of obedience; and must consequently despair of finding fit communicants apart from the spirits of just men made perfect. Examine the idea of *law* with the utmost rigour, turn it on all sides, and it will present nothing beyond the obligation to a certain species of conduct; so that if pædobaptists are

really disqualified for the Lord's supper, it must be for some other reason than their non-compliance with a *law*, or otherwise we must insist upon the refusal of every individual who has not discharged all his obligations. To expatiate on the distinctness and solemnity with which the baptismal ceremony was enjoined, is little less than trifling, in a debate with persons who fully accede to every part of the statement, and who wish to be informed, not whether our pædobaptist brethren are in error, but whether its moral amount, its specific nature, is such as to annul their claims to christian communion. On this point, the passages adduced maintain a profound silence.

If the practice of strict communion derives no support from the *law* of baptism, it is impossible it should derive it from apostolical precedent; since the apostles, as this author observes, adhered constantly to the rule. They did neither more nor less than its letter enjoined: consequently, we must be mistaken, if we imagine we can infer any thing from their practice, beyond what a just and fair interpretation of its terms would suggest. It the Acts of the Apostles are, as Mr. Kinghorn asserts, "a commentary on the law, showing us how it was practically explained," it is impossible it should contain a tittle more than is found in the text. Let us see how the apostles acted. "When they *taught* and men believed," says our author, "the apostles *baptized* them." Whom did they baptize? Undoubtedly such, and such only, as were convinced, not merely of the truth of christianity, but of the obligation of the particular rite to which they attended. This is precisely what we do. When we have reason to believe that any part of our hearers "have received the truth in the love of it," we proceed to explain the nature, and to enforce the duty, of baptism: and upon their expressing their conviction of its divine authority, we baptize them. Such a previous conviction is necessary to render it "a reasonable service." We administer that rite to every description of persons whom our opponents themselves deem qualified, and withhold it under no circumstances in which the apostles

would have practised it. Wherein, then, as far as that institution is concerned, does our practice differ from that of the apostles? Our opponents will reply, that though in the administration of that rite, our conduct corresponds with the primitive pattern, yet it differs in this, that we receive the *unbaptized* to our communion, which was not done in the apostolic age: To this we rejoin, that at that period no good men entertained a doubt respecting its nature—that it was impossible they should, while it was exemplified before their eyes in the practice of the apostles and the evangelists—that he who refused to abide by the decision of inspired men, would necessarily have forfeited his claim to be considered as a christian—that a new state of things has arisen, in which, from a variety of causes, the doctrine of baptism has been involved in obscurity—that some of the best of men put a different interpretation on the language of scripture on this subject from ourselves—and that it is great presumption to claim the same deference with the apostles, and to treat those who differ from us on the sense of scripture, as though they avowedly opposed themselves to apostolic authority. To misinterpret is surely not the same thing as wilfully to contradict: and however confident we may be of the correctness of our own interpretation, to place such as are incapable of receiving it, on the same level with those who withstood the apostles, differs little, if at all, from the claim of infallibility.

We reason, as we conceive conclusively, in favour of adult, in opposition to infant, baptism: our pædobaptist brethren avow their inability to discern the justice of our conclusion: and are they on that account to be viewed in the same light as though they intentionally rejected the decision of inspired men? What is this but to set up a claim to inspiration, or, at least, to such an infallible guidance in the explanation of scripture, as is equally exempt from the danger of error or mistake? If we examine it accurately, it amounts to more than a claim to infallibility: it implies in the pædobaptists a knowledge of this extraordinary fact. The apostles were not

only inspired, and consequently infallible teachers, but were known and acknowledged to be such by the primitive christians: and, before we presume to demand an implicit acquiescence in our conclusions, and to consider ourselves entitled to treat dissentients as we suppose the opponents of the apostles would have been treated, it behoves us to evince our possession of infallibility by similar evidence. As I have not heard of our opponents making such an attempt, I cannot sufficiently express my surprise at the loftiness of their pretensions, and the arrogance of their language. In their dialect, all christians besides themselves are "*opposed* to a divine command,"* "refuse subjection to Christ, and violate the laws of his house."†

The justice of their proceeding, founded on the pretension of apostolical precedent, is perfectly congenial with its modesty. Upon the supposition that a professor of christianity, in the times of the apostles, had scrupled the admission of adult baptism, could he, we would ask, in the circumstances then existing, have been considered as a good man, or a genuine convert? The reply will unquestionably be, No. "He," said St. John, "who is of God, heareth us: he who heareth not us, is not of God: hereby ye know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

In this case, then, it is admitted that the simple fact of rejecting adult baptism would have been sufficient to set aside a pretension to the christian character. Is it sufficient now? Are the pædobaptists to be universally considered as bad men, or, at least, as persons whose christianity is doubtful? Nothing is more distant from the avowed sentiments of our opponents. Where, then, is the justice of classing together men of the most opposite descriptions? or of inferring, that because the apostles would have refused communion to an unbaptized person, at a time when it is acknowledged that none but false professors could remain in that state, it is our duty to refuse it to some of the most excellent of the earth.

* Booth. † Kinghorn.

merely on account of the absence of that ceremony? As it is admitted, on all hands, that baptism was then so circumstanced, that the omission of it was inconsistent with a credible profession of piety, nothing more is necessary to account for the precedent which includes it; it was the necessary result of the then state of things, and the apostles, it is acknowledged, could not have extended their communion beyond the limits of that rite, without incorporating insincere professors. But if this reason is sufficient to account for it, it is unphilosophical and unreasonable to seek for another. The supposed inherent and inseparable connexion betwixt the two positive institutes, is another, and a totally different one, which is sufficiently excluded by the preceding reasoning

We presume it will not be doubted that scripture precedent is founded on wisdom, that it is not arbitrary and capricious. It would betray great irreverence to suppose that men, acting under divine inspiration, were not, in every branch of their official conduct, especially in whatever related to the regulation and government of the church, moved by the strongest reasons. Hence the inquiry why they acted as they did is essential to a rational investigation into the force and authority of scripture precedent. Their proceedings were regulated by their judgement, or, rather, by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which enlightened their minds, and directed their movements. If the *reason* for rejecting unbaptized persons in the primitive age applies to the case of pædobaptists, the argument for strict communion, derived from the practice of the apostles, is unanswerable. But if the cases are totally dissimilar—if our opponents can assign no *such reason* for excluding their christian brethren, as might justly have been urged against the admission of the unbaptized in the times of the apostles, the argument is totally inconclusive.

It is decided, by the express declaration of our Lord, that he who refuses obedience to any part of his will, is not a christian. "Then," saith he, "are ye my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." But

while there was no diversity of opinion on the subject, the voluntary omission of the baptismal ceremony could arise from nothing but a contumacious contempt of a divine precept, of which no sincere christian could be guilty. Here, then, we discover a sufficient reason for the matter of fact urged by our opponents, without supposing an intrinsic or invariable connexion betwixt the two ordinances. The principle of open communion would have compelled us to act precisely in the same manner as the apostles did, had we been placed in their circumstances. How vain, then, the attempt to overthrow that principle, by appealing to a precedent which is its legitimate and necessary consequence; and how unreasonable the demand which urges us to treat two cases as exactly similar, of which our opponents, equally with ourselves, are compelled to form the most opposite judgement. Let the advocates of restricted communion express the same opinion of the state and character of those whom they now regard as unbaptized, which we are certain they would feel no scruple in avowing with respect to such as had refused submission to that ordinance in primitive times, and we shall deplore their blindness and bigotry, but shall acknowledge they reason consistently from their own premises. But we will never submit to identify two cases which agree in nothing but the omission of an external rite, while that omission arises from causes the most dissimilar, and is combined with characters the most contrary. We will not conclude, that because the apostles could not bear with those that were evil, they would have refused to tolerate the good; or that they would have comprehended, under the same censure, the contumacious opposer of their doctrines, and the myriads of holy men, whose only crime consists in mistaking their meaning in one particular.

The remarks we have already made will be deemed, we trust, a sufficient answer to the triumphant question of Mr. Kinghorn. "How is it," he asks, "that with the same rule for the guidance of the church, the ancient christians could not receive a person to communion without baptism, if the modern both can, and ought to

receive him?"* The answer is obvious. If the ancient christians had received a person without baptism, they would have received a false professor; but, when we at present receive one whom we judge to be in a similar predicament, we receive a sincere, though mistaken, brother; we receive him who is of that description of christians whom we are commanded to receive.

If it still be contended that the two cases are so parallel, that the proceeding of the apostles in this particular, is binding as a law, we would once more ask such as adopt this plea, whether they themselves form the same judgement of the present pædobaptists as the apostles would have entertained of such as continued unbaptized in their day. If they reply in the affirmative, they must consider them as insincere hypocritical professors. If they answer in the negative, since, by their own confession, they look upon the persons whom they exclude in a different light from that in which the party excluded by the apostles was considered, what becomes of the identity of the two cases? and what greater right have they to *think differently* of the state of the unbaptized from what the apostles thought, than we have for *treating* them differently? They are clamorous in their charge against us of wilful deviation from apostolic precedents. But there are precedents of thinking as well as of acting, and it is as much our duty to conform to the *sentiments* of inspired men as to their actions. The chief use, indeed, which inspired precedents are of, is to assist us to ascertain the dictates of inspiration. The conduct of enlightened, much more of inspired men, is founded on sound speculative principles. If the advocates of strict communion urge us with the inquiry—By what authority do you presume to receive a class of persons whom you acknowledge the apostles would not have received? we reply—By what authority do you presume to deviate from the opinion of the apostles respecting that same class? Many, whom you exclude from your communion, as unbaptized, you acknowledge as chris

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 29.

tians, and, without hesitation, express your confidence of meeting them in glory. Did the apostles entertain the same judgement respecting such, in their day? Were they prepared to recognise them as brethren, and to congratulate them on their eternal prospects, while they repelled them from communion? Would they not, without hesitation, have applied to them the language which our Saviour uses, respecting such as refused to be baptized by John, whom he affirms to have "rejected the counsel of God against themselves?"

These questions admit but one answer. Here, then, is a palpable disagreement between the sentiments of our opponents and those of the apostles, on the subject of the unbaptized; the apostles would have both rejected and condemned them: *they* reject them as members, and embrace them as brethren. Were they called upon to defend themselves from the charge of contradicting the apostles, they would begin to *distinguish* betwixt the two cases, and urge the different circumstances which accompany the omission of the same ceremony now, from what must be supposed to have accompanied it in the times of the apostles; in other words, they would attempt to show that a new case has arisen, which necessitates them to form a correspondent judgement. They assume the same liberty with ourselves of *thinking differently* of the state of the many who continue unbaptized in the present day, from what they are persuaded the apostles would have thought of such as had remained in that situation in theirs; and yet, with strange inconsistency, accuse us of a deviation from a divine precedent in not treating them both in the same manner; forgetting that if the cases are parallel, they themselves are guilty of an avowed and palpable contradiction to the sentiments of the apostles.

When men differ in their views of one and the same object, it will not be denied that they contradict each other. We offer them the alternative, either to deny or to affirm, that to be unbaptized, at present, is in a moral view a very *distinct thing*, and involves very different consequences, from being in that predicament in the

times of the apostles. If they deny it, they stand self-convicted of contradicting the sentiments of inspiration, by speaking of that class of persons as genuine christians, whom they cannot but acknowledge the apostles would have condemned. If they adopt the affirmative, our practice, by their own confession, is not opposed to apostolic precedent, because that precedent respects a *different thing*.

They not only depart from the precedent of the apostles, in the judgement they form of the unbaptized, but in every other branch of their conduct, with the exception of the act of communion. On all other occasions they treat as brethren, and frequently, and that much to their honour, cultivate an intimate friendship with persons whom they deem to be destitute of that rite, the omission of which in the apostolic age would have incurred the sentence of wilful impiety and disobedience. What, we ask, is more opposite to primitive precedent, than the practice of including the same persons within the obligations of christian love and friendship whom they prohibit from communion; of inviting them into the pulpit, and repelling them from the table; uniting with them in the most retired and elevated exercises of devotion, and excluding them from the church? It is scarcely in the power of imagination to feign a species of conduct more diametrically opposite to all the examples of scripture; and when they have reconciled these, and many similar usages, with the practice of the primitive age, they will have supplied us with a sufficient apology for our pretended deviation from the same standard.

It will probably be thought enough has been already said to demonstrate the futility of the argument founded on original precedent: but as this is considered by our opponents in general, as well as by Mr. Kinghorn in particular, as the main prop of their cause, we must be permitted to detain the reader a little longer, while we enter on a closer examination of his reasoning.

In order to show that baptism is a necessary term of communion, he labours hard to prove that it is a term of

profession. "It is obvious," he says, "that their baptism (that of believers) was the term of professing their faith by the special appointment of the Lord himself." To the same purpose he afterwards adds, "the fact still exists, that it pleased the Lord to make a visible and ritual observance the appointed evidence of our believing on him. If obedience to a rite be not a term of salvation (which no one supposes), yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation; and a christian profession is not made in *Christ's own way without it.*" Recurring to the same topic,* he observes, "Whatever may be the conditions of salvation, a plain question here occurs, which is—*Ought the terms of christian communion to be different from those of christian profession?* The only answer which one would think could be given to this question would be, no: christian communion must require *whatever the Lord required as a mark of christian profession.*"

It is hoped the reader will excuse my accumulating quotations to the same purport, which would have been avoided, were it not evident that the writer considered this as his strong-hold, to which he repairs with a confidence which bespeaks his conviction of its being impregnable. We will venture, however, to come close to these frowning battlements; we will make trial of their strength, that it may be seen whether their power of resistance is equal to their formidable aspect. We freely acknowledge, that if the *principle* can be established that baptism is *invariably* essential to a christian profession, the cause we are pleading must be abandoned, being confident that a true profession of the christian religion is inseparable from church communion.

Previous to entering on this discussion, it will be necessary to premise that the words *profession* and *confession*, together with their correlates, are usually denoted by one and the same word in the original, and that they are evidently used by the authors of the received translation as synonymous.* Hence, whatever is affirmed in the New Testament respecting the *confession* of Christ, or of his sayings, may without hesitation be considered as predicated of a *profession;* since, whatever difference may subsist in the popular meaning of the words whenever they occur in scripture, they are merely different renderings of the same term.†

* Page 20.

Now, that the profession of Christ is an indispensable term of salvation, is so undeniably evident from the New Testament, that to attempt to prove it, seems like an insult on the understanding of the reader. I must crave his indulgence, however, for recalling to his recollection a very few passages, which will set the matter beyond dispute. "Whoever," said our Lord, "shall confess (or *profess*) my name before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven: and whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. x. 32. The same language occurs, with little variation, in the gospel of St. Luke, xii. 8. In these words we find an awful denunciation of the rejection of every one, without exception, who shall be found to have denied Christ; and as this denial is immediately opposed to *confessing* him, it must necessarily attach to all such as have not made a confession. If a medium could be supposed betwixt the denial and the open assertion of the doctrine of Christ, it is precluded by the following sentence:—"Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall

* The word in the original is ὁμολογία, derived from ὁμολογέω, a verb of the same import.

† See Matt. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. Matt. vii. 23. John ix. 22 John xii. 42. Acts xxiii. 8. xxiv. 14. Rom. x. 9, 10. 1 John iv. 15. 2 John 7. Rev. iii. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 13. τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν, a good profession, English Translation.—Heb. iii. 1. τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν, of our profession, E. T.—Heb. iv. 14. τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν, our profession, E. T.—Heb. x. 23. τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῆ, the profession of our faith without wavering.—Matt. vii. 23. τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς, then will I profess unto them. In each of the preceding passages the same word, under different inflections, is employed, and they contain all the passages which relate to the absolute necessity of a religious profession.

the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." —Luke ix. 26. Thence we may with certainty conclude, that from whatever motives a profession of christianity is omitted or declined, eternal perdition is the consequence. Nor is this the doctrine of the evangelists only: it is repeatedly asserted, and uniformly implied, in the writings of the apostles. "If thou shalt confess (or *profess*) with thy mouth," saith St. Paul, "the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession (or *profession*) is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 9. We find the same writer on another occasion exhorting christians to hold fast the *profession* of their faith without wavering, when the previous possession of that is necessarily supposed, a firm adherence to which is inculcated as essential to salvation. "Let us hold fast the *profession* of our faith without wavering." Heb. x. 23. It is to the faithful, considered as such, without distinction of sects and parties, that St. Paul addresses the following exhortation: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our *profession*, Christ Jesus." Heb. iii. 1. In the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, the phrase *our profession* occurs three times, and in each instance in such a connexion as demonstrates it to be an attribute common to all christians.*

It would be trifling with the reader's patience to multiply proofs of a position so evident from scripture, as the inseparable connexion betwixt a genuine profession of Christ, and future salvation. But if this be admitted, what becomes of the principal argument urged by Mr. Kinghorn for strict communion, which turns on the principle that "baptism is the term of christian profession"? Who can fail to perceive that if this proposition is true, the pædobaptists are, on our principles, cut off from the hope of eternal life, and salvation is confined to our-

* Heb. iii. 1 · iv. 14 · x. 13.

selves? The language of our Saviour and his apostles is decisive respecting the necessity of a *profession* in order to eternal life; this writer affirms that baptism, as we practise it, is an essential term of profession. By comparing these propositions together, a child will perceive that the necessary inference is the restriction of the hope of future happiness to members of our own denomination. This, in truth, is the conclusion to which all his reasoning tends; it meets the intelligent reader at every turn; but when he expects the writer to advance forward and press the fearful consequence, he turns aside, and is afraid to push his argument to its proper issue. He travails in birth, but dares not bring forth; he shrinks from the sight of his own progeny. Sometimes he seems at the very point of disclosing the full tendency of his speculations, and more than once suggests hints in the form of questions, which possess no meaning, but on the supposition of that dismal conclusion to which his hypothesis conducts him. Let the reader pause, and meditate on the following extraordinary passage:—"If baptism," he says, "was once necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which was *not* essential to salvation, *was* necessary to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be essential now?"* Again, he asks, "What is the meaning of the term condition? In whatever sense the term can apply to the commission of our Lord, or to the declarations of the apostles *respecting repentance, faith, and baptism;* is not baptism a condition either of communion or of salvation, or of both? Do the conditions, either of salvation or of communion, change by time? Are they annulled by being misunderstood?"†

Whatever of argument these passages may be supposed to contain, will be examined hereafter; the design of producing them at present is to show the tendency of the principle; and the reader is requested to consider whether they are susceptible of any other sense, than that

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 19. † Ibid. p. 20.

the terms of salvation and communion are commensurate with each other; that whatever was once essential to salvation is so still; and that baptism is as much a condition of salvation as faith and repentance. But if these are his real sentiments, why not speak plainly, instead of "uttering parables"? and why mingle, in the same publication, representations totally repugnant, in which he speaks of such as dissent from him on the subject of baptism, as persons of the most distinguished character—persons whom God will undoubtedly bring to his kingdom and glory? * The only solution this problem admits, is to suppose (what my knowledge of his character confirms), that to the first part of these statements he was impelled by the current of his arguments; to the latter, by the dictates of his heart. But however that heart may rebel, he must learn either to subdue its contumacy, or consent to relinquish the principal points of his defence. He has stated that the limits of communion must be the same with those of profession; that the pædobaptists have none, or, at least, none that is valid; and that, on *this* account, and for *this* reason, they are precluded from a title to christian fellowship. But the word of God, as we have seen, repeatedly insists on men's professing Christ, as an indispensable requisite to salvation. How is it possible, then, if Mr. Kinghorn's position is just, to evade the consequence, that those whom he would exclude from communion, are excluded from salvation?

"If obedience to a *rite*," he observes, "be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes,) yet it was ordered, by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation; and a christian profession is not made in Christ's *own way without it.*"† If the open acknowledgement of Christ by the pædobaptists is not to be esteemed a *real* and *valid* profession, the inevitable consequence is, for reasons sufficiently explained, that they cannot be saved; but if it is *valid*, (however imperfect in one particular,) it is so far

* Baptism a Term of Communion, pp. 21, 36. † Ibid, p. 18

made in Christ's *own way*. The expression which he employs to depreciate it, has either no meaning, or none that is relative to the object of the writer. The scope of his argument obliged him to prove that adult baptism is essential to a christian *profession;* he now contents himself with saying, that, without that ordinance, it is not made in the right way, which may, with equal propriety, be affirmed of every deviation from the doctrine and precepts of the gospel. Just as far as we suppose a person to depart from these, we must judge his profession not to be made in *Christ's own way;* nor will any thing short of a *perfect* profession, or, in other words, a perfect comprehension and exhibition of the will of Christ, exempt him from such an imputation; so that in this sense, which is the only one applicable to the case before us, to make a profession of the christian religion in *Christ's own way*, is not the lot of a mortal. But though this is the only interpretation consistent with truth, we cannot for a moment suppose that such was the meaning of the writer. He must have intended to assert that the parties, to whom they are applied, fail to make what *Christ himself* would deem a profession. This supposition is forced upon us by the scope of his reasoning, which went to prove that baptism is necessary to communion, *because* it is necessary to a profession. This supposed necessity must consequently relate, not to its *completeness* or *perfection*, but to its *essence:* he must be understood to affirm, that they have not exhibited what Christ will consider as a profession. But as *he* has solemnly affirmed his determination to reject such as are destitute of it, we ask again, how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile this with the salvability of pædobaptists?

Whatever it seems good to infinite wisdom to prescribe as an indispensable condition of future happiness, we must suppose that it exactly corresponds to its name: it is true and genuine in its kind, and wants nothing which constitutes the essence. If an open acknowledgement of Christ is the prerequisite demanded under the title of a profession, it would seem strange to assert that something less than what is correctly denoted by that

expression, is, after all, sufficient to satisfy the condition. This, however, is what Mr. Kinghorn must assert, to be consistent with himself; for he will not deny that the advocates of infant sprinkling have exhibited something *like a profession;* but as they have not made it in *Christ's own way*, it is not, strictly speaking, entitled to that appellation, and, consequently, cannot claim the privileges it secures. But if the case is as he states it, he must either confine the hope of salvation to his own party, or admit that, in the solemn denunciations before recited, it is not *really* a profession of Christ which is required, but merely something which resembles it. Whether the use of language so replete with ambiguity, or collusion, is consistent with the character of the "true and faithful witness," we leave to the decision of the reader. According to Mr. Kinghorn, while there are two modes of avowing our christianity, one so essentially defective as not to deserve the name of a *profession*, the other sound and valid; when the Supreme Legislator thought fit to enjoin the profession of his name, under the sanction of eternal death, he intended to insist on the first, in distinction from the last, of these methods. Let him who is able, digest these absurdities; from which, whoever would escape must either abandon the ground which Mr. Kinghorn has taken, or consign the pædobaptists to destruction.

But it is time to recur to the questions with which he has urged his opponents, and which he supposes it impossible to solve on my principles. "If baptism," he observes, "was *once* necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which was *not* essential to salvation was necessary to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be essential *now?* If it be argued that it was not essential to salvation *then*, it must either be proved that communion was held without it, or Mr. Hall's position must fall."*

Of the preceding dilemma, I embrace without hesitation the affirmative side, and assert that in the apostolic age, baptism *was* necessary to salvation. To the query which follows, how then can it be proved "that it is not essential now," I reply that it is unnecessary to attempt it, because it is admitted by Mr. Kinghorn himself; and it is preposterous to attempt the proof of what is acknowledged by both parties. It is very astonishing after he had so clearly avowed his conviction of the exalted character, and unquestionable piety of many pædobaptists, that he should ask the question: but he was probably so dazzled with the seeming subtlety and acumen of these pointed interrogatories, as not to perceive their total irrelevance. If he feels any hesitation in affirming that baptism was essential to salvation in primitive times, he entertains a lower idea of its importance than his opponents; but, on the contrary supposition, unless he totally retracts his liberal concessions, he must acknowledge that which was *once* necessary to salvation is not so now. The difficulty attending the supposition of a change in the terms of salvation, is urged with little propriety by one to whose hypothesis they apply in their full force; nor are they, when fairly examined, at all formidable. Owing to the incurable ambiguity of language, many truths founded on the clearest evidence, assume an appearance of paradox; and of this nature is the proposition which affirms that the terms of salvation are not unalterable: which may, with equal propriety, be affirmed or denied, in different senses. Since the *fundamental laws* of the kingdom of God are of equal and invariable obligation, a cordial compliance with which is essential to eternal felicity—since faith and repentance are at all times, and in all places, indispensable prerequisites to a justified state; in popular language there would be no impropriety in asserting that the conditions of salvation, under the gospel, remain the same from age to age.

But if this proposition is taken in its utmost rigour, and applied to every particular, connected with the faith and practice of christians, it is manifestly false. There are certain parts of christianity, which, as they exhibit

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 19.

the basis, and propound the conditions, of the new covenant, belong to its essence; certain doctrines which are revealed because they are necessary; and others, which are necessary, only because they are revealed: the absence of which impairs its beauty, without destroying its being. Of this nature are its few and simple ceremonies. But while this distinction is admitted, it will not be denied that the wilful perversion of the least of Christ's precepts, or the deliberate and voluntary rejection of his instructions in the smallest instance, would betray an insincerity utterly inconsistent with the christian character. "He who shall break the least of these my commandments, and teach men so, he shall be of no esteem in the kingdom of heaven."* The truth or precept in question may be of such an order, that a simple ignorance of it may not be fatal, yet to resist it, *knowing* it to be of divine authority, would be pregnant with the highest danger. The great Head of the Church will not permit us to set voluntary limits to our obedience: we must consent to receive all his sayings, or none. But it must be manifest, on reflection, that on its first publication, the visible *appendages* of christianity were exhibited with a lustre of evidence which no honest mind could withstand; and that no pretence for their neglect could subsist among such as professed religious integrity. Such was eminently the case with the two institutions which have occasioned the present controversy. The constant practice of the apostles appealing to the senses of men, and illustrating the import of their oral instruction, made the point of duty so plain, that its omission, in such circumstances, could be ascribed only to voluntary corruption.

Nor is this the only example which might be adduced. By orthodox christians the explicit belief of the doctrine of the atonement is now considered as indispensably necessary to salvation; but that the immediate followers of Christ were, during his personal ministry, so far fro embracing this truth, that they could not endure the m tion of his death, without expressing the utmost im

* See Campbell's Translation, Matt. v. 19.

tience, and that they knew not what was intended by his resurrection, are undeniable facts. The full developement of the gospel scheme, made at a subsequent period, has in this instance rendered that essential to salvation which could previously subsist without it.

It may also be observed, that a diversity of sentiment has arisen among christians, from different modes of interpreting the word of God, which has given birth to various sects and parties, unknown in primitive times. On many of these points it is impossible to suppose but that the sentiments of the inspired writers were expressed with sufficient perspicuity to be perfectly understood by the parties to whom they were originally communicated; and who, having repeatedly attended their ministry, had heard those particulars more fully illustrated and confirmed, which are briefly touched upon in their writings. Who can doubt that the true idea of election, whether it intends, as the arminians assert, the distinction conferred on some, above others, in the collation of external benefits, or the preordination of individuals to eternal life, was clearly ascertained by the primitive christians, so as to exclude the possibility of controversy and debate? The arminian will contend that the first christians entertained his notions of election and grace: the calvinist, with equal confidence, will maintain that the true and primitive interpretation of scripture is in favour of his hypothesis; and neither of them can consistently admit that the members of the primitive church adopted a different system from that which they respectively embrace. One of the parties will contend that the apostolic church consisted entirely of arminians; the other that it included none but calvinists.

Were it allowed that *some* variety of opinion on this mysterious topic, might subsist even amongst the earliest converts, it is impossible to suppose that there were none at that period who understood the doctrine of St. Paul: it would be most injurious to the reputation of that great writer to suppose he expressed himself with an obscurity which uniformly baffled the power of comprehension.

Let his meaning, for argument's sake, be supposed to agree with the arminian system; the adoption of that hypothesis was, on this supposition, essential to the salvation of him who was acquainted with that circumstance. For such a person to have embraced the calvinistic sentiments, would have been to pour contempt on the apostolic doctrine, and to oppose his private judgement to the dictates of inspiration. If we invert the supposition, the result is a similar conclusion in favour of the calvinist. Were these parties to exclude each other from communion, under pretence that the primitive christians were all calvinists, or all arminians; were the calvinist to assert that he dares not sanction so serious a departure from truth, as the denial of election, and that to receive such as were erroneous in this point, would be to admit a class of persons who had no existence in the primitive church, he would argue precisely in the same manner as Mr. Kinghorn. How would our author repel this reasoning, or justify a more liberal conduct? He certainly would not allege the original *obscurity* of the apostolic injunctions, and the possibility of primitive converts mistaking their meaning: he would unquestionably insist on the different degrees of importance attached to revealed truths, and the palpable difference betwixt mistaking the meaning, and avowedly opposing the inspired writers. But this is precisely our mode of defence.

When a dispute arose on the obligation of extending the rite of circumcision to the Gentiles, a council, consisting of the apostles and elders, was assembled to determine the question. Their decision was, that the Gentiles should no longer be troubled on that head, but that they should be strictly enjoined, among other things, carefully to abstain from things strangled, and from blood. It is universally acknowledged that it was the design of this injunction to prohibit the use of blood in food. This precept was enjoined expressly on the Gentiles, without the slightest intimation of its being of temporary duration; nor did it commence with the Jewish dispensation, but was in force from the period of the deluge.

I have not the smallest doubt that it is of perpetual force, however little it may be regarded in modern practice; and were the observation of it proposed as a term of communion, I am not aware of a single argument adduced by our opponents for their narrow exclusive system, which might not with superior advantage be alleged in favour of such a regulation. If it be urged that there never was a period when it was not the duty of believers in Christ to be baptized, it may be asserted with equal confidence, that the precept of abstaining from blood was invariably observed by the faithful from the time of Noah. If it be urged that the primitive church consisted exclusively of such as were baptized, it is equally certain that it consisted only of such as abstained from blood. That it was "once a term of communion" none will deny: "how then comes it to cease to be such?" In this case there is no room to allege a misapprehension of the meaning of the precept: it is susceptible but of one interpretation; and if the terms of communion are not "annulled by being misunderstood,"* much less when there is no such pretence. The only perceptible difference in the two cases is, that the precept respecting blood was not promulgated by the Saviour himself; but it resulted from the solemn and unanimous decision of his apostles, and is of more ancient origin than any other christian institute. If our opponents attempt to depreciate its importance by asserting that it is merely ritual and ceremonial, so is baptism; and as they were both enjoined by the same authority, both universally maintained in the primitive church, if the absence of one of these observances constitutes a church of *different materials*, so must the neglect of the other.

Such as violate the abstinence in question will not pretend that they observe the prohibition: they satisfy themselves with asserting their conviction, (a conviction not sustained by a syllable of scripture,) that it is only of temporary obligation; and as pædobaptists profess their conscientious adherence to the baptismal precept,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 20.

which they merely demand the right of interpreting for themselves, upon what principle is it that a mistake in the meaning of a positive injunction is deemed more criminal than its avowed neglect? or why should an error of judgement, which equally affects the practice in both cases, be tolerated in one, and made the ground of exclusion in the other? This reasoning, it is acknowledged, bears with the greatest weight on such as conceive the prohibition of blood to be still in force; who, if they adopt the principle of Mr. Kinghorn, ought, to be consistent, immediately to separate themselves from such as are of a contrary judgement. The same argument equally applies to laying on of hands after ordination and baptism. It is acknowledged that this rite was universally practised in the primitive times, that it claims the sanction of apostolic example, and it is enumerated by St. Paul amongst the *first principles* of christian doctrine. Wherever that practice is laid aside, it may with equal truth be affirmed, that the church consists of *different materials* from those admitted by the apostles; and it may be asked with an air of triumph, in the words of this writer, by what authority we presume "to make a scriptural rite of less consequence in the church of Christ than it was once?"*

Thus much may suffice for the vindication of our pretended departure from ancient usage and apostolic precedent. But as this topic is supposed to include the very pith and marrow of my opponent's cause, the reader must excuse my replying to some other parts of his reasoning. Confident of the soundness of our principles, it is my anxious wish that nothing may pass unnoticed that wears the shadow of argument; and that no suspicion be afforded of a desire to shrink from any part of the contest.

"If an obedience to a rite," says our author, "be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes,) yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an *evidence* of subjection to the Author of salvation."† He repeatedly asserts that it was prescribed as an *evidence* of faith in him. In another place he styles it, "the appointed *evidence* of our putting on Jesus Christ,' and affirms that "the church of Christ, acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognise *any person* as his disciple who is not baptized in his name."*

Let us first ascertain the precise meaning of these remarkable passages. He cannot be supposed to assert that baptism is *of itself* a sufficient evidence of saving faith: Simon Magus was baptized, who had "no part or lot in the matter." His meaning must be, that the ordinance in question forms a necessary *part* of the evidence of faith, insomuch that in the absence of it, our Lord intended no other should be deemed valid. That this was the case in the primitive age, we feel no hesitation in affirming; we have also shown at large the reason on which that conclusion is founded. But in no part of scripture is there the slightest intimation that it was more *specifically* intended as the test of faith, than compliance with any other part of the mind of Christ; or that it was *in any other sense* an evidence of the existence of that attainment, than as it was necessary to evince the possession of christian sincerity. Thus much we are most willing to concede, but are at a loss to know what is gained by it, unless our opponent could demonstrate that it occupies the same place at present, and that it is still necessary to constitute a valid evidence of faith in the Redeemer. If this is what he means to assert, (and nothing beside has the least relation to his argument,) how will he reconcile it with the confidence he so often expresses of the piety of the pædobaptists? His objection to their communion, he elsewhere informs us, "does not arise from suspicions attaching to their christian character,"† to which he trusts he is always willing to render ample justice. He has no suspicion of the piety of those who are destitute of that which Jesus Christ prescribed as *the evidence* of faith, and whom he affirms "it is impos-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 92. † Ibid. p. 18.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 140. † Ibid. p. 67.

sible for the church, acting on the rule which he has laid down, to recognise as his disciples." I am at a loss to conceive of a more palpable contradiction.

If there be any meaning in terms, the word evidence means that by which the truth of a fact or a proposition is made manifest, and the absence of which induces either hesitation or denial. Its place in the intellectual world corresponds to light in the natural; and it is just as conceivable how an object can be beheld without light, as how a fact can be ascertained without evidence. Mr. Kinghorn, it seems, however, has contrived to solve the problem; for while he affirms that the patrons of infant baptism are destitute of that which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed as the evidence of faith, and by which we are to recognise his disciples, he expresses as firm a conviction of their piety as though they possessed it in the utmost perfection. Let me ask on what is his conviction founded:—will he say upon evidence? But he assigns as a reason for refusing their fellowship, that they are destitute of that which Christ prescribed for that purpose. Will he distinguish betwixt that private evidence which satisfies his own mind, and the sort of evidence which Christ has demanded and enjoined? But what unheard-of presumption to oppose his private judgement to the dictates of Heaven; and, while the Head of the church has appointed the performance of a certain ceremony to be the invariable criterion of discipleship, to pretend, in its absence, to ascertain it by another medium! To attempt to prove that every thing really is what God has appointed it, and that Infinite Wisdom, where figurative language is excluded, calls things by their proper names, would be to insult the understanding of the reader. If compliance with adult baptism is, in every age, the appointed *evidence* of faith in Christ, it undoubtedly *is* what it pretends to be: and to ascribe faith to such as are destitute of it, is a sort of impiety.

"No church," he assures us, "acting agreeably to the rules of Christ, can recognise them as his disciples."*

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 140.

What strange magic lies concealed in the word church! This writer, in a multitude of places, makes no scruple of avowing his attachment to the members of other denominations; he even anxiously guards against the supposition of his indulging a thought to the prejudice of their piety; and the sentiments which he entertains himself, he must be supposed to recommend to the adoption of his brethren. In his individual character, he feels no objection to *recognise* them to the full as christians; nay, he expresses the sentiments of recognition in a studied variety of phrase: but the moment he conceives himself in a church, his tone is altered, and he feels himself compelled to treat them as strangers and foreigners. Why this contradiction betwixt the language of the individual, and the language of the church? If they *are* christians, why should the knowledge of the fact be suppressed there? We are taught by St. Paul to consider the church as the pillar and ground of the truth; where she is supposed to exhibit, as in a focus, the light and love which actuate her respective members; and instead of dissonance betwixt her public principles and the private sentiments of her members, we naturally look for a perfect harmony, or rather, for a more illustrious exhibition of what every one thinks and feels apart—for a great and combined movement of charity, corresponding to her more silent and secret inspirations. But we are doomed to anticipate it in vain; for while the advocates of strict communion are shocked at the idea of suspecting the piety of their pædobaptist brethren, they contend it would be criminal to recognise it in the church. What mysterious place is this, in which we are forbidden to acknowledge a truth proclaimed without scruple every where else; which possesses the property of darkening every object inclosed within its limits, and of rendering christians invisible and impalpable to each other! In the broad day-light of the world, notwithstanding their minor differences, they are recognised with facility; but the moment we enter the sombrous gloom of a baptist church, we are lost from each other's view; and, like those who visited the cave of Triphonius, return pale,

dejected, and bewildered. Of such societies we might be almost tempted to exclaim—"My soul, come not thou into their secret, and to their assembly be not thou united!" Shocked as we are at such illiberality, we suppress the emotions which naturally arise on the occasion, remembering (strange as it may seem) how often it is associated with talents the most respectable, and piety the most fervent.

CHAP. III.

The supposed necessary Connexion betwixt the two positive Institutes farther discussed, wherein other Arguments are examined.

THE reader can scarcely be too often reminded that the present controversy turns *entirely* on the supposed necessary connexion betwixt the two positive christian institutes; the recollection of which will at once convince him of the total *irrelevancy* of much which it has been customary to urge on the subject. Our opponents frequently reason in such a manner as would lead the reader to suppose we were aiming to set aside adult baptism. Thus they insist on the clearness with which it is enjoined and exemplified in the sacred volume, contend for its perpetuity, and represent us as depreciating its value, and dispensing with its obligation; topics which might be introduced with propriety in a dispute with the people called Quakers, or with the followers of Mr. Emlyn, but are perfectly irrelevant to the present inquiry. It surely requires but little attention to perceive that it is one thing to *tolerate*, and another to sanction; that to affirm that each of the positive rites of religion ought to be attended to, and that they are so *related*, that a mistake respecting one instantly disqualifies for another, are not the same propositions. An attention to that distinction would have incredibly shortened the present debate, and shown the futility of much unmeaning

declamation, and even of much unanswerable argument. We wish, if possible, to put an end to this σκιομαχια, this fighting with shadows and beating the air, and to confine the discussion to the *real question*, which is, whether the two positive ordinances of the New Testament are so *related to each other*, either in the nature of things, or by express command, that he whom we deem not baptized, is, *ipso facto*, or from that circumstance alone, disqualified for an attendance at the Lord's table. This, and this only, is the question in which we are concerned.

That there is not a necessary *connexion*, in the nature of things, betwixt the two rites, appears from the slightest attention to their nature. It will not be pretended that the Lord's supper is *founded* on baptism, or that it recognises a single circumstance belonging to it; nor will it be asserted to be a less reasonable service, or less capable of answering the design of its appointment, when attended to by a pædobaptist, than by persons of our own persuasion. The event which it "shows forth," is one in which all denominations are equally interested; the sacrifice which it exhibits is an oblation of whose benefits they equally partake; and so little affinity does it bear to baptism, considered as a ceremony, that the most profound consideration of it will not suggest the idea of that rite. As far as reason is capable of investigating the matter, they appear *separate* ceremonies, no otherwise related than as they emanate from the same source, and are prescribed to the same description of persons. In a word, judging from the reason of the case, we should not for a moment suspect that the obligation of commemorating the Saviour's death depended upon baptism: we should ascribe it at once to the injunction—"Do this in remembrance of me." Since positive duties arise (to human apprehension at least) from the mere will of the legislator, and not from immutable relations, their nature forbids the attempt to establish their inherent and essential connexion. In the present case it is sufficient for us to know, that whatever God has thought fit to enjoin, must be matter of

duty; and it little becomes weak and finite mortals to limit its sphere, or explain away its obligation, by refined and subtle distinctions.

It remains to be considered whether the *necessary connexion* we are seeking, can be found in positive prescription. We, again and again, call upon our opponents to show us the passage of scripture which asserts that dependence of the Lord's supper on baptism, which their theory supposes; and here, when we ask for bread, they give us a stone. They quote Christ's commission to his apostles, where there is not a word upon the subject, and which is so remote from establishing the essential *connexion* of the two ceremonies, that the mention of one of them only is included. They urge the conduct of the apostles, though it is not only sufficiently accounted for on our principles, but is such as those *very principles* would, in their circumstances, have absolutely compelled us to adopt; and surely that must be a very cogent proof that the apostles were of their sentiments, which is derived from a matter of fact, which would undeniably have been just what it is, on the contrary supposition. They baptized, because they were commanded to do so; they administered the Lord's supper, because our Saviour enjoined it on his disciples; and both these duties were prescribed to the societies they formed, because the nature and obligation of each were equally and perfectly understood. What is there in this, we ask, which our hypothesis forbids us to imitate, or which, had we been in their place, our views would not have obliged us to adopt?

The late excellent Mr. Fuller, whose memory commands profound veneration, attempts in his posthumous tract on this subject, to establish the connexion betwixt the two rites, by the joint allusion made to them in the epistles of St. Paul. From their being *connected together* in his mind, on those occasions, he infers an inherent and essential connexion. With this view, he adduces the tenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, which asserts that the ancient Israelites had a figurative baptism "in the cloud, and in the sea, and did all eat

the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ." "If the apostle," he remarks, "had not connected baptism and the Lord's supper together in his mind, how came he so pointedly to allude to them both in this passage?" He brings forward, also, another text to the same purpose, where St. Paul affirms we are all "baptized into one body, and are all made to drink into the same spirit." It is freely admitted that these, and perhaps other texts which might be adduced, afford examples of an allusion to the two ordinances at the same time, whence we may be certain that they were present together in the mind of the writer. But whoever considers the laws of association, must be aware how trivial a circumstance is sufficient to unite together in the mind, ideas of objects among which no essential relation subsists. The mere coincidence of time and place is abundantly sufficient for that purpose. In addressing a class of persons distinguished by the possession of peculiar privileges, what more natural than to combine them in a joint allusion, without intending to assert their relation or dependence; just as in addressing a British audience on a political occasion, the speaker may easily be supposed to remind them, at the same time, of their popular representation, of the liberty of the press, and the trial by jury, without meaning to affirm that they are incapable of being possessed apart. In fact, the warmest advocates of *our* practice would feel no sort of difficulty in adopting the same style, in an epistle to a church which consisted only of baptists; consequently, nothing more can be inferred, than that the societies which St. Paul addressed were universally of that description: a fact we have already fully conceded. The only light in which it bears upon the subject is that which makes it perfectly coincide with the argument from primitive precedent, the futility of which has been sufficiently demonstrated.

The *unities* which the apostle enumerates as belonging to christians, in his epistle to the Ephesians, are also set in opposition to us. "There is," saith he, "one body

and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." That this text is irrelevant to the present argument, will appear from the following considerations: Since no mention is made of the Lord's supper, it cannot be intended to confirm, or illustrate, the relation which baptism bears to that ordinance, which is the only point in dispute. Next, it is very uncertain whether the apostle refers to water baptism, or to the baptism of the Spirit; but, admitting that he intends the former, he asserts no more than we firmly believe, that there are not two or more valid baptisms under the christian dispensation, but *one* only; a deviation from which, either with respect to the subject, or the mode, reduces it to a nullity. Lastly, since his avowed object in insisting upon these *unities*, was to persuade his reader to maintain inviolate that unity of the Spirit to which they were all subservient, it is extremely unreasonable to adduce this passage in defence of a practice which involves its subversion. "The same fountain," St. James tells us, "cannot send forth sweet water and bitter;" but here we see an attempt to deduce discord from harmony: and to find an apology for dividing the mystical body of Christ, in the most pathetic persuasive to unity. The celebrated Whitby, a pædobaptist and an episcopalian, appears to have felt the full force of this admirable passage, when he deduces from it the three following propositions: 1st. "That sincere christians only, are truly members of that church catholic, of which Christ is the Head. 2dly. That nothing can join any professor of christianity to this one body, but the participation of the spirit of Christ. 3dly. *That no error in judgement, or mistake in practice, which doth not tend to deprive a christian of the spirit of Christ, can separate him from the church of Christ.*"* Thus it is, that this learned commentator conceives himself to have discovered a demonstration of the principles we are abetting, in the very words our opponents urge for their overthrow.

* Whitby *in loco*

Such is the substance of Mr. Fuller's argumentation on the subject; and on a basis so slight, did he attempt to rear the edifice of strict communion. In how different a light will he be viewed by posterity, as the victorious impugner of socinian and deistical impiety! and who, on looking back on his achievements in that field, and comparing them with his feeble efforts in the present, but must exclaim with regret, *quantum mutatus ab illo!* Whether he felt some distrust of the ground he was treading, which for several reasons I strongly suspect; or whether it is to be ascribed to the infelicity of the subject, it is not easy to say; but his posthumous pamphlet on communion, will unquestionably be considered as the feeblest of all his productions. The worthy editor probably calculated on great effects to arise from the dying suffrage of a man so highly esteemed; but before he ventured on a step so injurious to his fame, he should have remembered, that we live in an age not remarkably disposed to implicit faith, even in the greatest names.

But it is time to return to Mr. Kinghorn, with whose management of the subject we are at present more immediately concerned. As bold a polemic as Mr. Fuller was generally considered, he was pusillanimity itself compared to my present antagonist; who, in the ardour of combat, has not scrupled to remove land-marks which *he*, I am well persuaded, would have considered as sacred. It cannot be denied that he has infused by these means some novelty into the discussion, and that many of his arguments bear an original stamp; but whether that novelty is combined with truth, or that originality is such as will ultimately secure many imitators, or admirers, is another question.

Having already shown that no *inherent* connexion subsists betwixt the two *rites* under discussion, it remains to be considered, as we have already remarked, whether they are connected by *positive* law. Is there a single word in the New Testament, which, fairly interpreted, can be regarded as a *prohibition* of the admission of unbaptized persons to the Lord's supper?

Let Mr. Kinghorn answer this question for us: "*The*

New Testament," he tells us, "*does not prohibit the unbaptized from receiving the Lord's supper*, because no circumstance arose which rendered such prohibition necessary."* Whether a prohibition was necessary or not, involves a distinct inquiry; we request the reader's attention to the important concession, that *it does not exist*. The reason he assigns, however, for its not being necessary is, that "it is acknowledged the law of baptism was clearly understood, and that the unbaptized could not be received into the church." "There was *therefore*," he adds, "no reason why a prohibitory declaration should exist." We fully agree with him, that at the period of which he is speaking, the law of baptism was fully understood; and *on that account*, we say, such as refused to obey it, could not be received into the church. We also admit, that while there was this clear understanding, no such prohibition as we demand was requisite. But if it was rendered *unnecessary* because of this clear understanding, as this writer informs, must it not by his own allowance become necessary, when that understanding ceases? If the presence of one thing *makes* another *unnecessary*, must not the absence of the same thing restore the necessity?

In the present instance, the *only* reason he assigns for an express prohibition *not* being then necessary, is, that the ordinance of baptism was *perfectly understood;* surely if this be the *only* reason, the necessity must return when that reason ceases; in other words, there will be a necessity for an express prohibition of the unbaptized, whenever the precept respecting baptism ceases to be understood. Has it, or has it not, ceased (in our apprehension) to be understood by modern pædobaptists? If it be admitted that it has, then, on his own principle, an express prohibition of the unbaptized to receive the Lord's supper has become necessary. But he acknowledges that none exists; whence the only conclusion to be deduced is, either that the word of God has omitted what is necessary in itself, or (which is rather

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 32.

more probable) what is necessary to support *his hypothesis*. The word of God, it should be remembered, makes adequate provision for the direction of the faithful in every age, being written under the guidance of that Spirit to whom the remotest futurity was present; and though it was by no means requisite to specify the errors which were foreseen to arise, it is not a sufficient rule, unless it enables us to discover which of these are and which are not, to be tolerated in the church. The doctrine which asserts that baptism is an indispensable requisite to communion, this writer expressly informs us, was not promulgated among the primitive christians, because they did not need it: their clear understanding of the nature of the ceremony was sufficient of itself to secure an attention to it, in the *absence* of that doctrine. This is equivalent to an acknowledgement, if there be any meaning in terms, that if they had not had the clear comprehension of the ordinance which he ascribes to them, they would have needed that truth to be propounded, which in their situation was safely suppressed. But if the primitive christians would have found such information necessary, how is it that the modern pædobaptists, who are, according to our principles, precisely in the situation here supposed, can dispense with it? What should prevent them from turning upon Mr. Kinghorn, and saying—We judge ourselves baptized; but supposing we are not, you assert that there is no scriptural prohibition of the unbaptized approaching the Lord's table, which you yet acknowledge would have been necessary to justify the repelling of primitive christians from that privilege, had it not been for their perfect knowledge of the nature of baptism. But as you will not assert that *we* possess that knowledge, how will you defend yourself in treating us in a manner which, by your own concession, the apostles would not have been justified in adopting towards their immediate converts?

It was generally supposed that the abettors of strict communion imagined some *peculiar* connexion betwixt baptism and the Lord's supper, beyond what subsists betwixt that ceremony and other parts of christianity.

Our present opponent disclaims that notion. "If the above evidence," he says, "be justly stated, there is a real instituted connexion between baptism, and the whole of the succeeding christian profession. So that there is no reason why the connexion between baptism and the Lord's supper should be more distinctly marked, than between baptism and any other duty or privilege."* But if this be the case, why do they confine their restriction to the mere act of communion at the Lord's table? In every other respect they feel no scruple in acknowledging the members of other denominations as christians: they join with them in the most sacred duties; they interchange devotional services; they profess to value, and not unfrequently condescend to entreat, an interest in their prayers. In a word, no one who had not witnessed their commemoration of the Lord's supper, would suspect they made any distinction. There are a thousand acts which they perform towards such as practise infant sprinkling, which would be criminal and absurd on any other supposition than that of their being members of Christ, and co-heirs of eternal life. By the mouth of our author, whom they are proud of considering as their organ, they inform us that every other duty and privilege is as much dependent on baptism, as the celebration of the eucharist; yet it is *this* duty and *this* privilege alone, in which they refuse to participate with christians of other persuasions. How will they reconcile their practice and their theory: or rather, how escape the ridicule attached to such a glaring contradiction? The Sandemanian baptists have taken care to shelter themselves from such animadversions, by a stern and consistent process of intolerance; but the English baptists appear to resemble Ephraim, who mixed himself with the nations, and was a "cake half turned." Is there no duty, is there no privilege, characteristic of a christian, but what is included in receiving the sacrament? How is it that they have presumed to break down the sacred fence, to throw all open, and make all things

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

common, with the exception of one narrow inclosure? What, in the mean time, becomes of apostolic practice, and ancient precedent? How admirably are these illustrated by their judicious selection of the Lord's table, as the spot over which to suspend the ensigns of party!

When we read of Priscilla and Aquila taking Apollos home, and instructing him in the way of the Lord more perfectly, we give full credit to the narrative; but had we been informed that these excellent persons, after hearing him with great delight, refused his admission to the supper of the Lord, on account of some adversity of opinion or of practice, the consent of all the manuscripts and versions in the world would have been insufficient to overcome the incredulity, arising from an instantaneous conviction of its total repugnance to the maxims and principles of primitive christianity. Yet this would have been nothing more than an anticipation of the practice of our opponents.

They attempt to justify themselves in this particular on two grounds; first, that they "do nothing more than their opponents;" and "where their conduct is deemed the most exceptionable, they only copy the example which the pædobaptists set before them, and support by preeminent talents."* *They do nothing more than their opponents.* What then? *we* hold no principle inconsistent with our practice; *we* have not confined the profession of christianity to ourselves; much less are we accustomed to make a practical distinction betwixt the participation of the eucharist, and other duties and privileges, after stating, in so many words, that the scripture authorises no such distinction. The plea derived from the disposition of pædobaptists to cultivate a religious intercourse, we leave to be answered by himself, who has told us that "we meet on unequal terms." "The latter (pædobaptists) surrender no principle, they do not unite with those whom they deem unbaptized."†

Their other pretence is, that "prayer and praise are not *exclusive* ordinances of the church; that they were

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 173. † P. 64.

in being before it was formed, and have been parts of true religion under every dispensation."* But is it not the peculiar prerogative of the faithful to offer *acceptable* devotion? Is not *prayer in the name of Jesus* a peculiarity of the new dispensation, and is not the requesting a pædobaptist to present it on our behalf, as clear an acknowledgement of his christianity, as admitting him to communion, and, consequently, as incompatible with our author's own maxim, that the "church of Christ, acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognise *any* person as his disciple, who is not baptized in his name?"

Mr. Kinghorn is bound by his own declaration, in his treatment of other denominations, to abstain from every action which will imply an explicit acknowledgement of their being christians; so that, as far as he is concerned, it is of no consequence whatever, whether prayer and praise belong to natural or revealed religion, or whether they are or are not exclusive ordinances of the church: the only question is, whether the reciprocation of such services, with other denominations, be not a recognition of their christianity. If it be, he is, by his acknowledgement, as much obliged to abandon it, as the practice of mixed communion, and exactly for the same reason; since he informs us that his objections to that practice are not founded on any *peculiar* connexion betwixt communion and baptism, but on the common relation which the latter bears to "all the duties of christianity."

The preceding remarks are more than sufficient to evince his inconsistency with himself; which, however glaring, is not more so than his deviation from ancient precedent. That the first christians did not interchange religious services with those with whom they refused to *communicate;* that they did not countenance, in the exercise of their ministry, men whom they refused to acknowledge as members of the church,—it would be ridiculous to attempt to prove; the fact will be instantly admitted. Let it be also remembered, that this deviation is of far greater magnitude than that of which we are accused. Who, that remembers that the kingdom of God is not meats or drinks, that its nature is spiritual, not ritual, can doubt that the moral duties of religion, the love of the brethren, with its diversified fruits and effects, taken in their whole extent, form a more important object than the single observation of the eucharist?

Mr. Kinghorn himself deprecates the very suspicion of placing even baptism, in point of importance, on a level with the least of the moral precepts of Christ. But with respect to the whole of these, he and they allow themselves to depart as far from scriptural precedent, in its literal interpretation, as ourselves. In the affair of communion, they boast of adhering to "that plain rule of conduct, (to adopt my opponent's words,) *so did the apostles, and, therefore, so do we.*"* But here their conformity stops; in every other branch of social religion, in whatever respects the interior of the kingdom, they claim the liberty of treating the unbaptized in precisely the same manner with members of their own denomination; wherein they pronounce their own condemnation: for what should prevent us from retorting, "*so did not the apostles, but so do ye?*"

The distress and embarrassment which the consciousness of this glaring inconsistency occasioned the venerable Booth, are sufficiently depicted in his *Apology*. The sturdy saint perfectly reels and staggers under its insupportable weight; which, to use the language of Archbishop Tillotson, is a millstone round the neck of strict communion, which will inevitably sink it into perdition; an incongruity which the most obtuse understanding perceives, and no degree of acumen can defend; and which so totally annuls the plea of original precedent, which is their sheet-anchor, as to leave it doubtful, whether its advocates are most at variance with the apostles or with themselves. The venerable apologist has recourse to the same distinctions with the present writer, but with so

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 98.

little success, and, apparently, with so little satisfaction to himself, that if the spirit of controversy did not blunt our sensibility, we should sincerely sympathise with his distress. It is humiliating to see his manly and majestic mind stooping to such logomachies.

The advocates of the restrictive system must change their ground; they *must* either go forwards or backwards. They have already conceded so much to the members of other denominations, that, if they would preserve the least show of consistency, they must either concede more, or withdraw what they have granted. They have most unreasonably and capriciously stopped, and fixed their encampment where no mortal before ever thought of staying for a moment. They have already made such near approaches to the great body of those whom we deem unbaptized, as places them at an unmeasurable distance from the *letter* of the apostolic precedent, though in perfect harmony with its spirit; while they preposterously cling to that letter, as the reason for refusing to go an inch farther. They remain immovable, (to change the figure,) not because they rest on any solid basis, but because they are suspended betwixt the love of the brethren, and the remains of intolerance; just as Mahomet's tomb is said to hang betwixt two magnets of equal powers, placed in opposite directions.

The Scottish baptists (as I have been informed) act consistently. Conceiving, with Mr. Kinghorn, that immersion, on a profession of faith, is a necessary introduction to the christian profession, they uniformly abstain from a participation in sacred offices with the members of other societies, and, without pretending to judge of their final state, treat them on every occasion as men, whose religious pretensions are doubtful. Whoever considers the import of the following passage, will be surprised Mr. Kinghorn should feel any hesitation in adopting the same system. "It is granted," says our author, "that baptism is not expressly inculcated as a preparative to the Lord's supper; neither is it inculcated as preparative to any thing else. But the *first* act of christian obedience is, of course, succeeded by the rest; and

the required acknowledgement of our faith in Christ, in the nature of things, ought to *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith."*

By the *first* act of christian obedience, he unquestionably intends the reception of baptism; and the meaning of the sentence turns entirely on the word *first*. He designs to assert, that such is the prescribed order of religious actions—that unless that ordinance is *first* attended to, every other performance is invalid; that whatever it may be in itself, not occupying its proper place, it cannot lay claim to the character of a duty. We should be extremely concerned at imposing a false construction on his words; but if this is not his meaning, we despair of discovering it. But if our interpretation is just, unless we can conceive of a religion availing for eternal life, in the total absence of duties, it is equivalent to asserting, that none besides our own denomination possess true religion. He expressly tells us every other duty must *succeed*, that is, must come *after* baptism, which, with respect to pædobaptists, is impossible on our principles; whence it necessarily follows, that while they retain their sentiments, they are disqualified for the performance of duty. The only conceivable method of evading this conclusion, is to make a distinction, and to affirm, that though baptism ought, agreeably to the institution of Christ, to *precede* the other branches of religion, yet that when it is omitted from a misconception or mistake, the omission is not of such magnitude as to prevent their being accepted. But should our author explain himself in this manner, he will not only coincide with us, but his argument for strict communion will be relinquished. Having acknowledged that "the connexion between baptism and the Lord's supper is *not more directly* marked in scripture, than between that ordinance and any other duty,"† were he now to make a distinction in favour of the sacrament, and confine the disqualification to that particular, he would be guilty of an express con-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.
† Ibid. p. 30.

tradiction. Nor are his words susceptible of such an interpretation. The assertion he makes is in the form of a general proposition; which is, that *all* the duties of christianity must succeed baptism, in contradiction to going before it; and the disqualification for the Lord's supper, which he represents the pædobaptists as lying under, is inferred solely from the consideration of its constituting a part of those duties.

Thus much for the *duties;* let us next hear what he says of the *privileges* of christianity. Baptism, which he styles "the required acknowledgement of our faith in Christ," he tells us, "ought to *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith." They *ought* to precede, but *do* they in fact? Is it *his* opinion that all other sects, as a punishment for their disobedience in one particular, are left destitute of the spiritual immunities which flow from faith? If it is not, it behoves him to reflect on the presumption of such a mode of speaking, which is little less than arraigning the wisdom of the great Head of the church, who dispenses his favours in a manner so different from that which he ventures to prescribe. Should he reply, that Jesus Christ, as a Sovereign, is at liberty to act as he pleases, but that we are under an obligation of adhering to the settled order of his house, it is easy to perceive that this evasion is neither consistent with truth, nor sufficient to establish his consistency with himself. Are not his partizans in the daily habit of exhibiting towards the members of other societies, tokens of their fraternal regard, of inviting them to every branch of christian fellowship, short of admission to the sacrament? Will they deny that the communion of saints, even in the absence of that institution, is an important privilege?

In the next place, to represent the bestowment of spiritual blessings on the great body of the faithful, through the lapse of fifteen centuries, whose salvability, it is confessed, is capable of demonstration from scripture; to speak of this, as an extraordinary and extrajudicial procedure, is to confound the most obvious distinctions.

The terms of salvation, which are, radically, faith and repentance, are clearly propounded in the word of God; and surely it will not be doubted that multitudes out of the pale of our sect, have exhibited such proofs of their possessing these qualifications, that their enjoyment of the divine favour is not to be ascribed to a secret economy, similar to what has been conjectured by some to extend to virtuous pagans. Where revelation is silent, it becomes us to copy its reserve; but in the present instance, so far is this from being the case, that few propositions are more susceptible of proof from that quarter, than that an error, with respect to a positive rite, is not fatal; whence the necessary inference is, that the bestowment of God's favours on such as labour under that imperfection, is a known part of his conduct: that it is not only his intention so to act, but that he has taken effectual care to inform us of it; not, we presume, for the purpose of enabling us to contradict it, but as a pattern for our humble imitation.

When the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles, assembled in the house of Cornelius, though Peter had a short time before, doubted the lawfulness even of eating with them, he considered it as such a seal of the divine approbation, that he felt no hesitation in immediately admitting them all to the privileges of the church. He did not presume (with reverence be it spoken) to be stricter or more orderly than God. "Forasmuch," said he, "as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed, who was I that I should withstand God?" a question which we presume to recommend to the serious consideration of Mr. Kinghorn and his associates. The principle on which he justified his conduct is plainly this, that when it is once ascertained that an individual is the object of divine acceptance, it would be impious to withhold from him any religious privilege. Until it be shown that this was not the principle on which he rested his defence, or that the practice of strict communion is consistent with it, we shall feel ourselves compelled to discard, with just detestation, a system of action which St. Peter contemplated with horror, as *withstand-*

ing God: and, when I consider it in this just and awful light, I feel no hesitation in avowing my conviction that it is replete with worse consequences, and is far more offensive to God, than that corruption of a christian ordinance to which it is opposed. The latter affects the exterior only of our holy religion, the former its vitals; where it inflicts a wound on the very heart of charity, and puts the prospect of union among christians to an interminable distance.

This new doctrine, that the tenure by which religious privileges are held, is appropriated to the members of one inconsiderable sect, must strike the serious reader with astonishment. Are we in reality the only persons who possess an interest in the common salvation? If we are not, by what title do others possess it? Certainly not in consequence of their faith, for we are expressly taught by this writer, that baptism must *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith;* in which, however, he expressly contradicts himself, for he assures us that none are fit subjects of baptism who are not previously believers in Christ, and *justified in the sight of God by their faith.* He must either say, then, that they lose their justification unless they comply with that ordinance, or present us with the portentous doctrine of a justification which stands alone, a widowed and barren justification, productive of no advantage to its possessor.

Let it also be seriously considered, whether the positions we have been examining do not coincide with the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, the opprobrium of the Romish church. But as some of my readers may not be acquainted with the meaning of these terms, it is proper to remark, that the church of Rome attributes the highest spiritual benefits to certain corporeal actions, or ceremonies, independent of the character and disposition of the performer. For example, she believes that the ceremony of baptism secures to the unconscious infant, by its intrinsic efficacy, the infusion of regenerating grace, without regard to the intention or disposition

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 40.

of the parties concerned; and that the element of bread in the sacrament operates in the same manner in procuring the pardon, and augmenting the grace, of the communicant. Hence the members of that church lay little stress on the exercise of faith, and the cultivation of holy dispositions, compared to the dependence they place on "bodily exercise," on masses, penances, auricular confessions, and a multitude of external observances, which form the substance of their religion. Consistent protestants, on the contrary, while they conscientiously attend to every positive institute, according to the measure of their light, look upon the few and simple ceremonies of the gospel, as incapable of affording the smallest benefit apart from the dispositions and intentions with which they are performed; agreeably to the doctrine of our Saviour, who tells us, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." To expatiate on the incalculable mischiefs which have arisen from the Romish doctrine, is foreign to our purpose; suffice it to remark that it is held in just detestation by all enlightened christians.

Our business is to show the coincidence of Mr. Kinghorn's principles with that most dangerous and exploded tenet. He contends that the mere absence of a ceremony, or if you please, an incorrect manner of performing it, is, of *itself*, sufficient, exclusive of every other consideration, to incur the forfeiture of christian privileges; of the *privileges in general* which arise from faith.* It is not, according to him, merely the forfeiture of a title to the eucharist which it involves; *that*, he informs us, is not more affected by it than *any other privilege:* it is the universal privation of christian immunities which is the immediate consequence of that omission; and, as he acknowledges that many to whom it attaches are regenerated, they must consequently be endowed with right dispositions. For what is that renovation of mind which can exist without them? But if such as are possessed of these in the most eminent degree, which he acknowledges

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

is the case, with some pædobaptists, are yet debarred from spiritual privileges, wherein does this differ from ascribing that efficacy to an external rite, which is supposed in the doctrine of the *opus operatum:* and if those who have faith are not entitled to the benefits which result from it, because a certain ceremony is wanting, how is it possible to ascribe more to that ceremony?

Whatever degree of prejudice or inattention we may be disposed to impute to some of the advocates of infant baptism, it would be the highest injustice to comprehend them all under the same censure. There are those, no doubt, who, without adopting our views, have exercised as much thought, and exerted as much impartiality, on the subject, as our observation authorises us to expect from the brightest specimens of human nature: nay, this author admits that "it is possible they may be some of the most exalted characters in point of piety."* But it surely cannot be doubted that they who merit this encomium, are as *conscientious* in their performance of infant, as we in the administration of adult, baptism; and as they are, by the very supposition, actuated by dispositions exactly the same, the pure intention of pleasing and glorifying God, if we still conceive them deprived of the privileges which we possess, the difference must be ascribed merely to a ceremony, and the *opus operatum* returns in its full force. This however is too faint a statement. It returns in a form more aggravated; for the papist only contends for a mysterious union betwixt the outward rite and the inward grace, to which the regenerating influence is immediately ascribed, and from which it is considered as inseparable; whereas, on the present hypothesis, regeneration and faith are supposed to exist in the absence of the ceremony, but to be deprived of their prerogatives. The system of the papist exalts the ritual part of religion to an unwarrantable height, without depreciating the spiritual and internal; the system of my opponent does both.

Thus I have endeavoured to examine, with the utmost

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

care and impartiality, whatever our author has advanced, in order to prove the *necessary connexion* betwixt the two positive ordinances under consideration. My apology for extending the discussion to a length, tedious, it is feared, to the reader, is, that this is the point on which the whole controversy hinges. As far as its real merits are concerned, I might therefore be excused from pursuing the subject farther. If the arguments of Mr. Kinghorn, on this head, are satisfactorily refuted, and the contradictions and absurdities into which he has fallen, laid open to the reader, he is already sufficiently answered. That he has taken different ground from his venerable predecessor, will not be disputed. He has argued from premises, and adopted principles, to which that excellent person made no approach. Mr. Booth, whatever was his success, remained on *terra firma:* our author has attempted a flight beyond "the diurnal orb," but approaching too near the sun, his pinions are melted, and his fall will be conspicuous, in exact proportion to the elevation to which he has aspired. He was determined to give the controversy a new and imposing aspect; and, conscious that the practice which he undertook to defend had been hitherto rested on no very distinct basis, he determined to dig deep for a foundation, and in so doing, has disturbed the most received opinions, and endangered the most momentous truths. Were I permitted to prognosticate his fate, I should say that his paradoxical mode of defence, whatever applause it may meet with at present, will, in the end, be of infinite injury to the cause; and his treatise, like the little book in the Apocalypse, be "sweet in the mouth, and bitter in the belly."

But though what has already been advanced, may be considered as comprehending all that is essential in the controversy; as he has thought fit to introduce other topics, the reader is requested to exercise his patience, while we reply to his most important observations on each of these; after which we shall endeavour to show the futility of the answer he has attempted to the principal arguments adduced in favour of our practice.

PART II.

THE COLLATERAL TOPICS INTRODUCED BY MR. KINGHORN CONSIDERED.

CHAP. IV.

The Charge of dispensing with a Christian Ordinance considered.

AMONG the various objections to the system we wish to see universally adopted in our churches, there is none more frequently insisted upon than that of its implying a right to *dispense* with a command of Christ.* Though the Treatise on the Terms of Communion contains a clear answer to this accusation, yet, as it is again brought forward by our author, with unabated confidence, a fuller reply may be deemed requisite.

This writer supposes that the expression "dispensing power," so often used in this controversy, was first suggested by the conduct of Charles the Second, in granting indulgence to the dissenters beyond the allowance of law, a measure which was afterwards adopted, for similar purposes, by James, his successor. It is surprising a person of Mr. Kinghorn's acknowledged learning should fall into such an error; that he should not know that the doctrine of dispensation was familiar to preceding ages, and was the subject of much subtle disquisition, and of many refined distinctions among legal writers. It is impossible but that he must have read, in ecclesiastical history, of the power of dispensation assumed by the pope, which formed a principal branch of the papal revenue, and the exertion of which was regulated by the dictates of the most artful policy. He cannot, surely, have forgotten that the refusal to exercise this prerogative, when it was demanded in order to gratify the capricious passions of Henry the Eighth, was the immediate occasion of the reformation in England.

* "Here the following question deserves our serious regard, first, Have we any right to dispense with a clear command of Christ?" *Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 90.

The power of dispensation is the power of setting aside the law in a particular instance. It may be exerted by the legislature, or by the executive branch of government, under certain regulations, and to a certain extent, previously settled and provided for by the original constitution of the state. As the operation of law is general, and the actions to which it applies are susceptible of endless modifications and varieties, some such power may be occasionally requisite to adapt it more perfectly to unexpected emergencies, and, by a deviation from the letter, to secure its spirit and design. There is one circumstance, however, which is invariably attached to the exercise of this prerogative, which shows the impropriety of making it the ground of accusation in the present controversy. It always implies a *known* and *conscious* departure from the law. He who claims a dispensing power, asserts his right to deviate from the letter of legal enactments; but whoever merely misinterprets their meaning, and, on that account, applies them to a case which they were not designed to comprehend, or neglects to carry them into execution within their proper sphere, (as his conduct is consistent with the utmost reverence for the law,) is at a great remove from exerting a dispensing power. He betrays his ignorance, but usurps nothing.

When the pope granted a dispensation, enabling certain persons to marry within the prohibited degrees, he sanctioned an acknowledged violation of the ecclesiastical canons; just as Charles the First and James the Second, in their respective proclamations of indulgence to tender consciences, proceeded in direct opposition to existing statutes. But we are conscious of no such procedure:

if we err, we err from ignorance. We contend that the law is in our favour, and challenge our opponents to prove the contrary; we ask what prohibition we violate by the practice of admitting good men to communion, though they are not supposed to be baptized? This writer acknowledges there is none, but attempts to supply the defect by general reasoning, which appears to us inconclusive. Such is precisely the state of the dispute; not whether we have a right to depart from the law, but whether there be any law to which our practice is opposed. We acknowledge the immersion of believers in the name of Christ is a duty of perpetual obligation; we are convinced of the same respecting the commemoration of our Saviour's passion. Both these duties we accordingly urge on the followers of Christ, by such arguments as the Scriptures supply; but, when we are not so happy as to produce conviction, we admit them, without scruple, to the fellowship of the church; not because we conceive ourselves to possess a dispensing power, a pretension most foreign from our thoughts, but because we sincerely believe them entitled to it, by the tenour of the christian covenant, and that we should be guilty of highly offending Christ by their refusal. The law which we are supposed to violate in this instance, we affirm is a mere human invention, a mere fiction of the brain, entirely unsupported by the word of God, which distinctly lays down two positive institutes, baptism and the Lord's supper, but suggests nothing from which we can conclude that they rest upon each other, rather than that the obligation of both is founded on the express injunction of the legislator. It is our opponents, we assert, who, in the total silence of scripture, have presumed to promulgate a law, to which they claim the submission due only to the voice of God. Hence the charge of usurping a dispensing power is most preposterous, since it is incapable of being sustained for a moment, until it is demonstrated that the law is in their favour; and when this is accomplished, we pledge ourselves to relinquish our practice immediately; but, till it is, to assume

it as a medium of proof, is a palpable *petitio principii*, it is begging the question in debate.

We repeat again, what was observed in the former treatise, that this charge owes its plausibility entirely to the equivocal use of terms. As we do not insist upon baptism as a term of communion, we may be said, *quoad hoc*, or so far, to dispense with it; just as our opponents may be said to dispense with that particular opinion, the doctrine of election, for example, which, while they firmly adhere to it themselves, they refrain from attempting to force on the consciences of others; on which occasion, a rigid calvinist might, with the same propriety, exclaim that they are guilty of dispensing with the truth of God.

So remote is our practice from implying the claim of superiority to law, that it is, in our view, the necessary result of obedience to that comprehensive precept—"Receive ye one another, even as Christ has received you to the glory of the Father." If the practice of toleration is admitted at all, it must have for its object some supposed deviation from truth, or failure of duty; and, as there is no transgression where there is no law, and every such deviation must be opposed to a rule of action, if the forbearance exercised towards it is assuming a dispensing power, the accusation equally lies against all parties, except such as insist upon an absolute uniformity. In every instance, he who declines insisting on an absolute rectitude of opinion or practice, as the term of union, is liable to the same charge as is adduced against the indulgence for which we are pleading. If the precise view which each individual entertains of the rule of faith and practice, is to be enforced on every member as the condition of fellowship, the duty of "forbearing with each other" is annihilated: but, if something short of this is insisted on, what is wanting to come up to the perfection of the rule, is, in the sense of our opponents, dispensed with. Behold, then the *dispensing power* rises in all its terrors; nor will it be possible to form a conception of an act of toleration where it is not included. Such is the inevitable consequence,

if the charge is attached simply to our not insisting upon what we esteem a revealed duty; but, if it is sustained on the ground of the necessary dependence of one christian rite upon another, it is plainly preposterous, since this is the very position we deny; it forms the very gist of the dispute, the proof which will at once consign it to oblivion. The objection, in this form, is nothing more than an enunciation, in other terms, of our actual practice.

In every controversy, the medium by which a disputed point is attempted to be disproved, should contain something distinct from the position itself, or no progress is made. There may be a show of reasoning, but nothing more. It is also necessary, that the medium of proof, or confutation, should contain some proposition, about which both parties are agreed. But what is the case here? Our opponents object that we exercise a dispensing power. How does this appear? Because, while we acknowledge baptism to be a duty, we do not invariably demand it as a preliminary to church fellowship. Now let me ask, is this statement any thing more than a mere definition, or description, of the practice which is the subject of debate; so that if an inquiry were made, what we mean by open communion, in what other terms could the answer be couched? The intelligent reader will instantly perceive, that the medium of confutation involves neither more nor less than the proposition to be refuted. Perhaps they will reply, No; you are guilty of dispensing with the law, not merely because baptism is a duty, but because the Head of the church has made it an indispensable prerequisite to christian fellowship. Here the medium is indeed sufficiently distinct from the proposition which it is intended to confute, but it is so far from being agreed upon between the parties, that it forms the very subject of debate. In other words, they take for granted the very position on which the controversy turns, and then convert their arbitrary assumption into an argument. Thus, in whatever light it is viewed, the odious imputation with which they attempt to load

us, falls to the ground; and merely shows with what facility they can *dispense* with the rules of logic.

Near akin to this, is the charge of "sanctioning" a corruption of a christian ordinance. But how the mere act of communion with a christian brother, whose practice we judge to be erroneous in a certain particular, can be justly considered as conferring a sanction on his error, is not a little mysterious. If this is a fair construction, it must proceed upon the general principle, that communion sanctions all the imperfections, speculative and practical, of the members whom it includes; and thus our opponents must be understood to approve all the perverse tempers, and erroneous views, of the individuals whom they receive into fellowship. Will they abide by this consequence? But how is it possible to escape it, if to tolerate and to sanction, to forbear and to approve, are the same thing? Will they assert that St. Paul was prepared to exclude the members of the church at Corinth, against whose irregularities he so warmly protested; or affirm that, by declining such a step, he sanctioned the schisms and tumults, the backbitings, whisperings, and swellings, which he reproved with so much severity. The idea is too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment; but not more so than the present allegation.

Were an impartial spectator to witness the celebration of the sacrament, by persons of different denominations, what would he infer? That they considered each other as beings "without fault before God," with nothing in their sentiments liable to correction, or in their characters susceptible of improvement? No: the only conclusion which he could consistently draw would be, that they looked upon each other as pardoned sinners, washed in the same fountain, sanctified, though imperfectly, by the same Spirit, and fellow-travellers to the same celestial city.

We must either seek a church such as is not to be found upon earth, or be content to associate with men compassed with infirmities; prepared to exercise towards others the forbearance and indulgence which we need,

and to exhibit on every occasion the humility becoming those who are conscious that in "many things we all offend."

Besides, as our author acknowledges that baptism is not to be "compared in importance with the least of Christ's moral precepts," against which men of unquestionable piety are perpetually offending, to a greater or less extent; where is the consistency of being more solicitous to avoid the appearance of sanctioning ceremonial, than moral disobedience?

The following sentiment, marked in italics, and delivered with the solemnity of an oracle, is characterized by the same spirit of extravagance. "The supposition itself," our author says, "that toleration and forbearance will justify us in allowing an omission of any law of Christ in his church, operates as a repeal of that law, and would generally be deemed unreasonable."* As all duty bears respect to a law, it is impossible to conceive of its omission, without supposing an equal omission of the law.

He illustrates his assertion by referring to the legal qualification, in landed property, required in a candidate for a seat in parliament; where it is evident that, to render the cases parallel, it must be assumed, that baptism is, by the appointment of the Head of the Church, the necessary qualification for the rights of fellowship, which is the very point in debate; so that we have here another instance of that habit of begging the question with which he is so familiar. On what occasion has he found us concede what is taken for granted in this illustration; or who would be so absurd, after such a concession, as to pursue the argument any further?

The proposition itself is as untenable, as its illustration is irrelevant. If every rule of action is repealed, the moment its omission, whether partial or total, whether occasional or habitual, whether intentional or unintentional, is the object of forbearance, a repeal is the necessary concomitant of every conceivable instance of toleration. For say, on supposition the will of Christ were perfectly complied with, in doctrine and in practice, what possible room would there be for mutual forbearance? What, to speak of forbearance, when all is right! Is perfection then the object of toleration? But just in proportion as imperfection exists, some law, some rule of conduct, must be neglected; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." Will it be affirmed, that when St. Paul censured, with so much severity, the swellings, the tumults, the whisperings, and the backbitings, which prevailed in the church of Corinth, whose members were ready to devour each other; when he found it necessary to remind them, that the unjust should not inherit the kingdom of God, did he after all perceive in them no omission of a law of Christ? This surely none will affirm: and, as he still continued to exercise forbearance, without the slightest intimation of an intention to exclude them, he was guilty, on Mr. Kinghorn's principles, of repealing the commands of God. As the evils tolerated were of a moral nature, and he tells us, that he is far from "equalizing baptism with the least of Christ's moral precepts;" if, in spite of his own concession, he now assigns it a superiority, what is this but a palpable contradiction? But to say that a mistake respecting the nature of a christian ordinance, is not to be borne with in religious society, while evils of a moral kind are, and must be tolerated, is to mark its preeminence, in a manner the most unequivocal.

The mistakes into which he has fallen in this short passage, are so gross and so many, that they deserve a distinct enumeration. First, By affirming that to endure, under any circumstances, the omission of a rule of action, is to repeal it, he has reduced the very conception of toleration to an impossibility. Secondly, As there can be no moral imperfection, but what involves, at least, an occasional omission of a moral precept, the least of which, he affirms, is of greater moment than baptism; he must either contend for the propriety of setting aside forbearance altogether, or must be understood to select for its object the greater, in preference to the least, of

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 53.

two evils. Thirdly, In assuming it for granted, that there is a law in existence, which universally prohibits the unbaptized from communion, he assumes the whole question in debate; and if no such rule is admitted, how is it possible we should be guilty of repealing it? Fourthly, In stigmatizing the practice of not invariably insisting on a compliance with primitive baptism, in order to fellowship, as a virtual repeal of the precept which enjoins it, while we inculcate it as a divine command, and testify our disapprobation of its neglect, is a strange abuse of terms, founded on the following principle; that whatever is not absolutely and invariably required as a term of communion, is virtually repealed; whence it necessarily follows, that the whole of that duty in which the church of Corinth was defective, that whole portion of the mind of Christ which they failed to exemplify, was considered, by St. Paul, as no longer binding; since, however it might excite his concern, and draw forth his rebuke, the *want* of it, it is evident, did not prevent his forbearance. Will he abide by this inference? If he declines it, let him show, if he is able, why it is less applicable to the conduct of St. Paul, than to ours?

That we do not repeal the ordinance, by which our denomination is distinguished, considered as a *duty*, is a fact, of which we give ocular demonstration as often as it is celebrated. True, say our opponents, but you repeal it, as a necessary preliminary to the Lord's supper. To which the answer is obvious: first prove that it is so, and then, should we continue obstinate, load us as much as you please with the opprobrium of abrogating a divine command. But cease to run round this miserable circle, of first assuming the existence of a law, confining communion within certain limits, then accusing us of repealing it, and lastly, of finding us guilty of transgressing the prescribed bounds, on the ground of that repeal. He who repeals a rule of action, reduces the system of duty to exactly the same state as though it had never existed. Whenever we are convicted of doing this, whenever we teach the nullity of baptism, or inculcate a habit of indifference, respecting either the mode or the subject of that ordinance, we will bow to the justice of the charge; but till then, we feel justified in treating it with the neglect due to an attempt to convince without logic, and to criminate without guilt.

The *πρωτον ψευδος*, the radical fallacy, of the whole proceeding, consists in confounding an interpretation of the law, however just, with the law itself; in affirming of the first, whatever is true of the last; and of subverting, under that pretext, the right of private judgement. The interpretation of a rule is, to him who adopts it, equally binding with the rule itself, because every one must act on his own responsibility; but he has no authority whatever to bind it on the conscience of his brother, and to treat him who receives it not, as though he were at direct issue with the legislator. It is this presumptuous claim of infallibility, this assumption of the prerogative of Christ, this disposition to identify ourselves with him, and to place our conclusions on a footing with his mandates, that is the secret spring of all that intolerance which has so long bewitched the world with her sorceries, from the elevation of papal Rome, where she thunders and lightens from the Vatican, down to baptist societies, where "she whispers feebly from the dust."

This writer has, with the best intentions, I doubt not, dragged from its obscurity a principle whose thorough application and developement would doom, not our societies alone, but every church in the universe, to a confusion of minds and of tongues, a state of discord and anarchy, the healing of which, would soon find him other employ than that of attempting to defend the petty and repulsive peculiarity to which he has devoted his labours.

Before I close this chapter, it is proper to observe, in order to obviate misconception, that nothing is more remote from my intention than to plead for a *wilful* omission of any part of the will of Christ. His honour, I trust, is as dear, His prerogative as sacred, in the eyes of the advocates of *christian*, as it is in those of *sectarian*

communion. Let each, in the regulation of his own conduct, pay the most scrupulous attention to His orders; and wherever he distinctly perceives that a professor of religion indulges himself in a known and habitual violation of them, let him, after seasonable and repeated admonition, "withdraw from the brother that walketh disorderly." But let him not presume to control the sentiments and conduct of others by his standard, and treat as an enemy or an alien, that humble follower of Christ, who is as sincerely devoted to his will as himself; and who, however he may mistake it in some particulars, would shudder at the thought of setting voluntary bounds to obedience. If, to tolerate such, must subject us to the reproach of repealing the law of Christ, let us remember that we are not the first who have been condemned for undervaluing the ritual part of religion, and for preferring mercy to sacrifice. As "we must all appear before the judgement-seat of Christ," we await, with much composure and confidence, his decision; without indulging the smallest apprehension that we shall meet with less compassion for having shown it, or that we shall incur his displeasure for refusing to "beat our fellow-servants."

CHAP. V.

An Inquiry how far the Practice of mixed Communion affects the Grounds of Dissent from the Church of England, and from the Church of Rome.

Mr. Kinghorn expresses his surprise that the champions of the hierarchy have neglected in their controversy with dissenters, to *avail themselves of the practice of mixed communion.* For my part, I am only surprised at his surprise. For, supposing (what is most contrary to fact) that it had furnished them with some advantage against a part of the baptists, what mighty triumph would it be to have proved, that a branch only of a denomination, by no means considerable in their eyes, had been betrayed into an inconsistency? The abettors of a splendid hierarchy were little likely to descend to a petty altercation with the members of one division of dissent, respecting a point which could merely supply an *argumentum ad hominem*, and about which their opponents are far from being agreed.

To us, however, it is of importance to consider whether the doctrine we have attempted to establish, is justly chargeable with infringing on the legitimate principles of dissent. With this view, we shall briefly examine the substance of our author's arguments on this subject.

We are accused of inconsistency in arraigning the church of England "for introducing rites and ceremonies which have indeed no scriptural authority, but which are pleaded for, merely as decent and venerable customs; while we ourselves tolerate in the church, the neglect of an institution which we are convinced was universally obeyed in the apostolic times, and which was appointed by the highest authority."* To this we reply, that the cases are not parallel; they differ in the most essential particulars.

It is one thing to tolerate, and another to practise. The law of God invariably and absolutely forbids the latter; that is, it uniformly prohibits the performance of a single action which we esteem contrary to his will, but to say it in all cases forbids the former, is to insist on an absolute agreement respecting every branch of practice. The objection is brought against *us* who neither practise nor sanction infant baptism, that we are chargeable with the same criminality which is supposed to attach to the introducers of human rites and ceremonies in religion, ceremonies which they unquestionably both practise and approve. The argument of the writer reduced to the form of a syllogism is as follows:—

To practise human rites and ceremonies in the wor ship of God is sinful;

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 123.

But the advocates of mixed communion suffer to remain in the church, persons who practise a certain ceremony of human invention;

Therefore *their* conduct is sinful.

Who does not perceive that the second proposition has no necessary connexion with the first, and that the argument is consequently invalid? In order to establish his conclusion, it behoved the author to prove that we practise and approve infant baptism, which he knows to be impossible. If pædobaptists required our concurrence in what we esteem an erroneous practice, nay, if they refused us the liberty of protesting against it, there would be an analogy betwixt the two cases; and as it is, there is none.

We are bound by an express law to tolerate in the church those whom Christ has received; and he has, by the acknowledgement even of our opponents, received the pædobaptists. The first of these positions we feel ourselves justified in affirming till it be disproved; which this writer is so far from having done, that no attempt, we shall plainly make appear, was ever more unsuccessful. But whether it be true, or not, that we are commanded to act thus, such is our opinion; and with this persuasion, we are not at liberty to act in a different manner. But will such as prescribe human rites and ceremonies, pretend to act under a similar conviction, a conviction that they are bound by the law of Christ, to use the cross in baptism, to bow to the east, to kneel at the sacrament, and to exact as a term of communion, a compliance with these and other ceremonies, judged by themselves indifferent, and by us sinful? The most zealous champions of the hierarchy make no such pretension, and we may therefore very consistently censure them for enforcing, under such a penalty, the observation of rites for which no divine precept is urged, while we tolerate pædobaptists in obedience to a divine injunction; unless it be the same thing to practise in the worship of God, what it is allowed he has not commanded, and to comply with an express prescription. If the

members of the establishment inquire, On what ground do you receive a pædobaptist? we reply, Because we are expressly commanded to receive him. But if we inquire in our turn, Why do you kneel at the sacrament, and exact that posture of all your communicants, is it affirmed that they will reply in the same manner? It is not true, then, that mixed communion stands upon the same ground with the rites and ceremonies of the church of England; consequently, whatever be its merits or demerits in other respects, it may be maintained, in perfect consistence with the principle of dissent.

To the objection that it was as much unknown in the apostolic age as the ceremonies in question, we have already replied, that at that period it was impossible there should be any controversy on the subject of baptism, which was so recently instituted and so fully exemplified in the conduct of the apostles; but that now, when a question has arisen, what is baptism, a new case occurs, in the determination of which we must be guided by the precepts respecting mutual forbearance. To this the author replies in behalf of the churchman, "Very well; and when the emperors and kings of former days were converted to the christian faith, and were desirous of sanctioning the gospel by their character, their property, and their influence, another *new case* occurred, of which apostolic times knew nothing. When nations became generally christian, other *new cases* arose out of the new events of the time."* To this I answer, It is very possible, undoubtedly, for a churchman to utter the same words, and say a *new case* has arisen; but unless he can say it with the same truth, it will be nothing to the purpose. There is no reason why we should not assert what is true, merely because a false assertion respecting another subject may be couched in the same words. Is it true, or is it not, that a refusal to comply with a precept, knowing it to be a command of Christ, is a very different thing from a mere misconception of the nature and import of that command: if it be, will it

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 124

be asserted that such as had refused to make a profession of his religion, in the way which they were conscious he had appointed, would have been just as excusable as the most candid and impartial of modern pædobaptists? Unless he will assert this, the author must acknowledge that here is a new case, and that the question how we should treat the wilful contemner of legitimate authority, and the erroneous interpreter of scripture, involves separate inquiries. From a multitude of passages it is manifest, that he himself forms a very different opinion of the present pædobaptists, from what he would entertain of such as knowingly and deliberately resisted a positive command. He professes to give them entire credit for their sincerity, and to entertain a firm persuasion of their ready admission into the kingdom of heaven; which would be absurd on the latter supposition. In maintaining a different conduct towards two descriptions of persons, between which there is acknowledged to be a total diversity of character, we are perfectly consistent; unless it be asserted that judgement ought to have no influence on conduct, nor action be controlled by principle.

Let the impartial reader judge for himself whether it is possible, by any fair mode of argument, to infer from these premises the lawfulness of making the conversion of kings to christianity a pretext for placing them at the head of the church, or of acknowledging their right to model the worship of God at their pleasure. Yet this is asserted, and these portentous consequences are said necessarily to flow from our principles. It is a matter of some curiosity, what kind of syllogism will fairly connect the two following propositions. It is lawful to admit a pious pædobaptist to communion, because we are commanded to receive such as Christ has received. Therefore it is lawful to acknowledge a pious prince as head of the church, and to allow him to model its worship as he pleases. We quoted a scriptural precept for the former; will Mr. Kinghorn favour us with something equivalent for the latter; or will he remind us of the passages which assert Christ to be the "Head over all things to the church," or those which command us to

"call no man master upon earth?" His reasoning in this, as in the former instance, is clogged with a twofold absurdity: first, he confounds toleration with concurrence; for they who contend for the right of a king to be head, I presume *acknowledge* him as such: secondly, because we may innocently do what is commanded, or rather are not permitted to do the contrary, he, with great simplicity, infers, we may lawfully venture on what is *forbidden*.

The same reasoning applies to the introduction of ceremonies, and completely invalidates his conclusion, that because we tolerate infant baptism, which we consider as a human invention, we cannot consistently depart from the established church on account of the introduction of rites which we deem superstitious. He represents a churchman as addressing us in the following manner. "Is not forbearance to be granted to *us* also in what we deem right and expedient? Suppose that we are weak brethren, as weak as you choose to represent us; why should you not, even in pity to our weakness, tolerate us in adding a few things to the original institutions of the Lord, rather than leave us, and by schism rend the seamless garment of Christ?"* In reply to this, let me ask, Is the toleration of objectionable ceremonies sufficient to constitute a churchman? or are we invited to be mere spectators of these observances, without *joining* in them? But do the pædobaptists, when *they* propose to commune with us, expect us to join with them in their practice of infant baptism? How futile then is it to conclude, that because we are not to do evil that good may come, we must on no occasion bear with the imperfections we cannot remedy.

Mr. Kinghorn largely insists on the superiority of his system to ours, on account of its being at a greater remove from the principles of the established church. "The strict baptist," he observes, "can set the churchman at defiance, while he tells him respectfully, but plainly, that his church is wrong in its very constitution,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 125.

that it is formed of materials different from those used by the Saviour, and that these materials are united together in a way totally diverse from that of his institution."*

Had he succeeded in showing that his practice is alone consistent with the principles of dissent, his argument would have been to the purpose. But to found a claim to preference, merely on a wider deviation from the established church, is to take for granted, what is palpably false, that the established church, like the kingdom of darkness, is a mere mass of corruption and error, from which the farther we recede, we necessarily approach nearer to rectitude. That it comprehends many abuses, we sufficiently attest our conviction by our dissent; but as it contains a mixture of good and evil, if we suffer ourselves to look with a more favourable eye upon a doctrine, merely because its admission will remove us farther from the establishment, we may fall, ere we are aware, into the gulf of perdition. Upon this principle we may embrace socinianism; for socinians are, unquestionably, farther removed from the church than orthodox dissenters. We may embrace popery, since all sound catholics consider the church of England as being in a damnable state. We always supposed it was the agreement of a doctrine with the scriptures, not its disagreement with any human system, which formed its true recommendation; and that to consult our antipathies in the choice of a religion, was equally unchristian and unsafe.

Besides, the objection which he makes to the constitution of the established church, is as consistent with our principles as with his. Where a society embraces a whole nation, and recognizes as her members all who are born within certain geographical limits, many who are openly wicked must necessarily be included; and the materials of which it is composed essentially different from those which formed the primitive church, which consisted of such as were "called, and chosen, and faithful." Of such an assemblage it is not too much to say, in the words of this writer, "that the whole body, taken in the aggregate, are of a *different character* from that which is in the New Testament called a church of Christ:"* and as this reason for dissent, deduced from the indiscriminate mixture of good and bad, is not weakened or impaired by the practice of open communion, we are as much entitled as he is to all the advantage it affords.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 127.

But when we are accused of using different materials in the erection from those which were originally admitted into the fabric, because we admit some who in our judgement are not baptized, we deny the charge, and acknowledge ourselves at a loss to conceive how "living stones, built on the only true foundation," can essentially differ from each other on account of a transient ceremony, unless it is affirmed, that sanctifying grace is a less powerful principle of attraction and assimilation than an external circumstance, and that Simon Magus bore more resemblance to the primitive christians than Richard Baxter. We are at an equal loss to discover how a ceremony can impress a character. That immersion leaves no permanent corporeal mark, our senses assure us: is this character, then, impressed on the understanding, on the heart, or the imagination? For the idea of a character which modifies and changes nothing, is as unintelligible to me as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

What the writer means by appropriating to himself and his brethren the exclusive right of setting a churchman at defiance, is equally mysterious, especially as clogged with this condition, "as long as he can establish his propositions by sufficient proof." A wonderful prerogative indeed! By setting him at defiance, he intends that he is secure of confuting his arguments, which it seems he is able to effect so long as he can establish the opposite propositions by sufficient proof. What is this more than affirming, that he is certain of being able to prove what he can prove?—and as the churchman can

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 127.

certainly do the same, they may each enjoy, upon this principle, the pleasure of mutual defiance and mutual triumph.

He either insults the understanding of his readers by the enunciation of a truism, or he means to assert that the practice he has undertaken to defend is so identified with the principles of dissent, that it is incapable of being maintained without it. The falsehood of this assumption has been sufficiently evinced already; in addition to which, the reader is requested to reflect on the extreme imprudence of attempting to rest a controversy of such magnitude on so precarious a basis; and to divide and distract a common cause, by encumbering it with the debate on baptism and the verbal subtleties of strict communion. To such a mode of defence the churchman might justly reply—Physician, heal thyself; convince your own denomination of the correctness of your reasoning, before you presume to trouble us with the mysteries of your cabala.

Mr. Kinghorn, in his zeal for baptism, intimates his conviction that the admission of infants to that ordinance will at once legitimate the constitution of the established church, and render a secession from it indispensable. He quotes, with apparent approbation, a long passage from Bishop Hall, intended to show that if the baptism of the church is valid, its constitution must be so also, which he prefaces by applauding that prelate's discernment, in seeing clearly their intimate connexion. "All your Rabbins," says the bishop, "cannot answer the charge of your rebaptized brother. If we be a true church you must return; if we be not (as a false church is no church of God), you must rebaptize; if our baptism be good, then is our constitution good."* Nothing can be more futile than this mode of arguing, which merely proves that the good bishop, with all his brilliance of genius, was but an indifferent reasoner. He thought himself justified in dissenting from the church of Rome. notwithstanding her baptism was ever esteemed valid.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 122.

By the ancient church, through all successive ages from the council of Nice, the rebaptization even of heretics was condemned; though heretics were certainly not esteemed a part of the church. The very society of which the bishop was a member, has always professed to consider baptism, administered by every class of dissenters in the name of the Trinity, as valid;* so that if the reasoning extolled by Mr. Kinghorn is just, he was guilty of schism in refusing to unite, at one and the same time, with heretics, Roman Catholics, and dissenters.

Not satisfied with asserting that our principles militate against the lawfulness of dissent, he maintains that they are inconsistent with protestantism, and that, by necessary consequence, they convict Luther and his associates of schism and rebellion. In the treatise on *Terms of Communion*, it had been urged, that if we believe our pædobaptist brethren to be in a state of salvation, we must acknowledge them as a part of the true church, and that to refuse them communion is to create a schism in the body. Applying this reasoning to the case of the Roman Catholics, he attempts to repel it, by remarking that if "we have no right to refuse their communion with us till they conform to what we are convinced is the will of Christ, we had no right to leave them because they deviated from his will. The ground is in both cases *the same.* Once take away the obligation of conforming to the will of Christ, and the reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection, in which all protestants are involved as aiding and abetting a needless and schismatical project."†

To this I reply, that to suppose us to take away the obligation of conforming *in our own persons* to the will of Christ, is to suppose us no longer christians. For, to deny the obligation of obedience, is at once to deny his authority; which is equivalent to a formal renunciation of christianity. But if he means that we are obliged to

* See Sir John Nicholl's Judgement, delivered 11 Dec. 1809, in the case Kemp against Wickes, for refusing to bury an infant child who had been baptized by a dissenting minister.—Ed.

† Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 55.

demand in others a perfect compliance with his will, as a term of communion, he takes away the possibility of toleration; for we can be said to tolerate nothing but what we disapprove, and we can assign no other reason for our disapprobation, besides its apparent repugnance to the mind of Christ. His argument, therefore, is entirely nugatory. It is acknowledged that the lawfulness of admitting a Roman Catholic to *our* communion, supposing him to be a real christian, is a necessary inference from our principles; but to conclude from thence that we are obliged to adhere to *his*, is demonstrably false and sophistical; nor is there the least pretence for asserting that the "ground in both cases is the same." Of two actions which involve consequences infinitely different, it is impossible the ground should be the same. To receive a pious Roman catholic to our communion, implies nothing more than an acknowledgement of his being a member of Christ, which is true by the supposition: to commune with him in the rites peculiar to the Romish church, is to be guilty of gross idolatry and superstition, which, however pardonable it may be in him whose conscience is uninformed, in me who have no such plea would be damnable. Luther was necessitated to depart from the external communion of the church of Rome, if he would not partake in her corruptions, because her communion formed a principal part of those corruptions. Besides, since that church maintains the infallibility of all her decisions, and whoever ventures to promulgate a doubt respecting a tittle of her doctrine, is *ipso facto* excommunicated till he recants, when the light of truth revealed to Luther her enormities, it was not left to his option to continue in her society, or not, unless he would involve himself in the guilt of most horrid prevarication. He never pretended to depart from the Romish church absolutely, and in every thing, but in those particulars only in which she had corrupted the doctrine of the gospel and adulterated the worship of God; and, however highly he might estimate the advantages of unity, he could not purchase them at the expense of a good conscience, nor dare, by assenting to error or concurring in

superstition and idolatry, "to do evil that good might come." But if a catholic, of whose piety he entertained no doubt, had offered himself for communion with him, without recanting popery on the one hand, or proposing to innovate in the worship of God on the other, on such a supposition, if Luther had refused to receive him, his conduct might have been justly censured. Now, I would put it to the conscience of any impartial person, to determine whether Luther would have had precisely the *same reasons* for declining this act of toleration, as for refusing his approbation of indulgencies, or his adoration of the mass. In exercising the forbearance in question, he would have merely attested the piety of the communicant; in the other case he would have directly countenanced and supported what he esteemed impiety and idolatry. With him who is prepared to assert, that each of these methods of proceeding are equally criminal, it is vain to dispute; but if they are not, the assertion that the *ground* in both cases is the same, is undeniably false.

Having detected the palpable sophistry, by which my opponent would evince the inconsistency of our principles with the cause of protestantism and of dissent, it remains only for me to remind him of the facility with which the argument may be retorted, and of the striking resemblance between the system of strict communion, and that which is maintained by the churches of England, and of Rome.

1. The Romish church, it is well known, pretends to an absolute infallibility; not, however, in such a sense as implies an authority to introduce new doctrine, but merely in the proposal of apostolic traditions, and in the interpretation of scripture. While she admits the scripture to be the original rule of faith, she requires, under pain of excommunication, that the sense she puts on its words should be received with the same submission with the inspired volume. In what respects, let me ask, is the conduct of the *strict* baptists different? A controversy arises on the extent of a positive rite, whether it should be confined to adults, or be communicated to

infants. Both parties appeal to the scripture, which the baptist interprets (in my humble opinion) correctly, in such a manner as to restrict it to believers; the pædobaptist, with equal sincerity, supposes it to include infants. While the former in his own practice confines it to the description of persons to whom he judges it to belong, he acts with unexceptionable propriety; but when, not satisfied with this, he insists upon forcing his interpretation on the conscience of his brother, and treats him precisely in the same manner as though he avowedly contradicted Christ and his apostles, what is this but an assumption of infallibility? All that infallibility which the church of Rome pretends to, is the right of placing her interpretation of scripture on a level with the word of God: she professes to promulgate no new revelation, but solely to render her sense of it imperative and binding: and if we presume to treat our fellow christians, merely because they differ from us in their construction of a positive precept, as unworthy of being *recognised* as Christ's disciples, (the very words of this writer,) and disqualified for the communion of saints; if we allow them "faith," while we deny them "obedience," and affirm them not to "revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, or obey the laws of his house," we defy all the powers of discrimination to ascertain the difference of the two cases, or to assign a reason why we must ascribe the claim of infallibility to one, and not to the other.

On another occasion Mr. Kinghorn observes,* that the strict baptists show they understand the distinction between *judging for others*, and acting on their own responsibility. But in imposing their own sense of scripture on their brethren, and affirming that on account of their differing from them, they do not "revere the authority of Christ," is either *judging for others*, in every possible sense of the words, or the writer has made an impossible supposition. He adds, they allow that the pædobaptists, *on their own principles*, do right in forming

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 67.

themselves into churches, and in commemorating the death of their Lord. And must they not do equally right, *on their own principles*, in baptizing infants, unless he will assert that the propriety of baptizing infants is not their principle? If judging for others is supposed to involve a claim of infallibility, and on that account, and that alone, to be shunned, to attempt to vindicate the practice of our opponents from that imputation will baffle the acutest intellect.

2. We have already observed the coincidence of our opponent's system with the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, or the intrinsic and mechanical efficacy of religious rites independent of the intention and disposition of the worshipper. The Roman catholic attaches such importance to the rite of baptism, as to believe that when duly administered, it is *necessarily* accompanied with the pardon of sin and regenerating grace. The strict baptist maintains that its absence, where all other religious qualifications are possessed in the highest perfection which human nature admits, deprives the party of "the privileges of faith,"* and renders him an alien from the christian church.

Both the church of Rome, and the church of England, have *devised terms of communion of their own*, and rendered it necessary for their members to comply with innumerable things, besides those which Christ has enjoined as requisite to salvation. The lawfulness and propriety of doing so, is the *palmarium argumentum*, the main pillar and support of strict communion. Let this principle once be abandoned, and the present controversy is at an end, unless our opponents choose to assume new ground, by affirming the necessary connexion between baptism, as they administer it, and the attainment of eternal life; and that they should not perceive the absolute necessity of proceeding so far, in order to be consistent, seems to approach to a judicial infatuation.

3. The adherents to the papal power claim to themselves the exclusive appellation of the *church:* the arro-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

gance of which pretension is faithfully copied by the advocates of strict communion. The former, however, by confining salvation within her own pale, avoid the absurdity into which the latter fall; who, while they affirm that the great body of the faithful are not entitled to that appellation, are obliged to distinguish between the mystical body of Christ and his church, which the scriptures expressly affirm to be one and the same.

CHAP. VI.

The Propriety of Appealing in this Controversy to the peculiar Principles of the Pædobaptists, briefly examined and discussed.

It is due, in my apprehension, to the majesty of truth, that she should be defended only by truth, and that we should on all occasions abstain from attempting to increase her partizans by corrupt suffrages. Such are the suffrages she may accidentally gain by the influence of error. As she scorns to employ the aid of violence, which is foreign to her nature, so, much less will she condescend to owe any portion of her ascendency to falsehood, which it is her eternal prerogative to confound and to destroy. He who wishes to enlighten the human mind, will disdain to appeal to its prejudices, and will rather hazard the rejection of his opinions, than press them as a necessary corollary from misconceptions and mistakes. If the decision of controverted questions is to be subjected to vote, and a superiority of numbers is to pronounce a verdict, the means by which they are procured is a matter of indifference: he who is most successful in enlisting popular humours and prejudices on his side, will infallibly secure the victory. To all legitimate argument, however, it is essential for the parties concerned to reason on principles admitted by both; to take their stand upon common ground, and to adopt no

medium of proof, of the truth of which, he who suggests it is not satisfied.

How far Mr. Kinghorn's management of the controversy, corresponds with these just requisitions, the impartial reader will be at no loss to determine. In his zeal to increase the number of his partizans, he makes frequent and urgent appeals to the pædobaptists, with whom the point at issue can rarely, if ever, become a practical question, and who are, therefore, little interested in its decision. As they admit, without hesitation, the validity of our baptism, the question whether the right administration of that ordinance be an essential requisite to communion, has no immediate relation to the economy of their churches: it interests them only in the case of those individuals who may be desirous of communing with baptist societies. As far as it concerns the necessity of that particular rite by which we are characterized, it is a controversy in which we are the only parties; and, however much we venerate the judgment of the religious public, we cannot forget that their motives to a rigorous examination of the question, bear no proportion to ours. To them it is a theoretical inquiry, to us a practical one of the most serious moment. If, in appealing to them, however, Mr. Kinghorn had constructed his reasoning on principles common to baptists and pædobaptists, there had been no room for complaint. But, instead of this, he enumerates and marshals, with such anxiety, all the appendages of infant baptism, all it assumes, and all it infers, as so many irrefragable arguments for his hypothesis, that were we to judge of his sentiments from these passages alone, we should suppose him as tremblingly alive to the consistency of pædobaptists, as Eli to the preservation of the ark. He adjures them by every thing which they deem sacred in their system, not to forsake him in the conflict, reminding them that if they do so, they must abandon a multitude of positions which they have been accustomed to maintain against the baptists, (that is, against himself,) and be compelled to relinquish the field. He therefore exhorts them to be faithful unto death, in the defence of

error, and to take care that no arts, blandishments, or artifices, seduce them to concessions which would embarrass them in their warfare, and render the cause of infant baptism less tenable. Thus he reminds them that by admitting the principle for which we contend, they must relinquish their plea for baptizing infants, on the ground of its "giving the seed of believers a partial membership, which is recognised and completed when they profess their faith in maturer years. Thus one leading popular representation of its utility is given up." This infant membership, however, he elsewhere exclaims against, as the very precursor of antichrist, the inlet to almost every abomination; and this popular representation, he considers as a most dangerous fiction.* He tells them, that were he a pædobaptist, and disposed to adopt my theory, he should be afraid of being pressed with the question, Of what use is infant baptism?† It is unnecessary to remind the reader, that in the opinion of Mr. Kinghorn it is of none whatever, but a most pernicious abuse of a christian ordinance. But, what is more lamentable still, he warns them that if "they enter into the spirit of our representation, they will be in danger of neglecting it altogether, and consequently, either abandon the whole institution, or be induced by the examination of scripture, to become baptists;" that they will be "guilty of a complete deviation from the principles of their predecessors; that they must find new arguments for their infant baptism; and that without attempting to divine what they may be, their cause will be materially injured by the acknowledgement of the necessity of adopting new modes of defence." All this appears very strange from the pen of a zealous baptist, who contemplates every one of the doctrines which he appeals to, with unqualified abhorrence; and who must be aware that just in proportion to the degree of their repugnance to the practice of mixed communion, is the presumptive evidence in its favour. To attempt the recommendation of his theory, by insisting on the

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p 17 † Ibid. p. 22.

impossibility of reconciling it with what is, in his opinion a system of delusion, indicates something nearly resembling the unrestrained impetuosity of a mind so intent upon the end, as to be indifferent about the means, and savours more of the art and sophistry of a pleader, than of the simplicity which characterizes a sober inquirer after truth. My knowledge of the author forbids the slightest suspicion of any deliberate intention to mislead; but in my humble apprehension he has been betrayed by the warmth of debate, and the intemperate sallies of his zeal, into the use, to adopt the mildest expression, of unhallowed weapons; and, by courting an alliance with error, degraded his cause.

It is probable he will attempt to justify his proceeding, by saying he has merely availed himself of an *argumentum ad hominem*. But he has greatly exceeded the limits assigned to that species of argument, which may be very properly employed to repel a particular objection of an opponent, by showing that it recoils upon himself, but should never be laid at the basis of a process of reasoning, because the utmost it can effect is to evince the inconsistency of two opinions, without determining which, or whether either of them, is true.

But it is not merely to acknowledged errors that the author appeals, with a view to discourage our pædobaptist brethren from uniting with us; he also endeavours to rouse into action a feeling, which, whatever name he may think fit to give it, is, in my apprehension, neither more nor less than pride. He remarks, that, in joining with us, they must either "consider themselves as unbaptized, or satisfied with their own baptism, whatever we may think of it, or as agreeing with the maxim, that baptism, in any form, is of no consequence to communion." The first of these suppositions he very properly puts aside as impossible. The second, he reminds them, is "*degrading*, because they permit themselves to be considered as persons who have not fulfilled the will of the Lord, in the very point in which they believe they have fulfilled it. They, consequently, unite with us on terms of inferiority; and he who refuses to commune

with us, because, in so doing, he tacitly allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple of Jesus as he thinks he is, acts a part which is justifiable and dignified."* The amount of this reasoning is, that whenever a christian perceives that his brother entertains a less favourable opinion of his conduct in any particular than he himself does, he is bound to renounce his communion; because, in every such instance, he must be considered as not so complete a disciple as *he* thinks he is, and to allow himself to be so considered, is a meanness. And from hence, another consequence infallibly results, that no two christians ought to continue in communion, between whom there subsists the smallest diversity of judgement, respecting any point of practical religion; for since each of them, supposing them sincere, must believe his own practice more agreeable to the will of Christ than his brother's, that brother must be aware that he is considered as not so complete a disciple as he judges himself to be, to which, it seems, it is degrading to submit. The author may be fairly challenged to produce a single example of a disagreement amongst christians, to which this reasoning will not apply; and, therefore, admitting it to be just, he has established a canon which prohibits communion whereever there is not a perfect unanimity in interpreting the precepts of Christ; which he, who reflects on the incurable diversity of human opinions, will acknowledge is equivalent to rendering communion impossible.

Although the instance under immediate consideration respects a point of practice, the conclusion will hold equally strong in relation to doctrinal subjects. For, not to remind the reader that different opinions, on practical points, are, in effect, different doctrines, and that the whole disagreement with our pædobaptist brethren originates in these, it is undoubtedly true of points of simple belief, as well as of christian duties, that, whoever adopts a sentiment different from that of his fellow-christians, must, by the latter, be regarded as in an error; and,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 115, 116.

since revelation claims faith, as well as obedience, "not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is," to which, if it is degrading for him to submit, his only remedy is to depart, and quit the communion. A fine engine truly for dissolving every christian society into atoms, and for rendering the church of Christ the most proud, turbulent, and contentious of all human associations!

If it be alleged that Mr. Kinghorn's reasoning was not designed to apply to the smaller differences which may arise, but only to grave and weighty matters, such as the nature of a christian ordinance, the obvious answer is, that it is of no consequence to us for what it was designed, but whether it be sound and valid; in other words, whether it be a sufficient reason for a pædobaptist's refusing to join with us, that in "so doing he allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is." If it be, the consequences we have deduced will inevitably follow.

Not satisfied, however, with denouncing the union of pædobaptists with us as "undignified," and as placing themselves on terms of "inferiority," he begs them to consider whether it is not a "surrender of their principles in a manner altogether inconsistent with their views of the law of Christ." This surrender, he proceeds to inform us, consists in their "agreeing to be considered as unbaptized, which is contrary to the opinion which they entertain of themselves." We certainly make no scruple of informing a pædobaptist candidate that we consider him as unbaptized, and disdain all concealment upon the subject; but how his consent to join us on these terms involves an unworthy surrender of his principles, is very mysterious. His principle is, that infant baptism, which we believe to be a human invention, is a part of the will of Christ. Now, how his allowing *us* to believe this, without breaking with us on that account, amounts to a dereliction of it, is a riddle which it would require an Œdipus to solve. May he not retain his sentiments, and believe us in an error; and is not his continuing unbaptized a demonstrative proof that he does so? And while this is the

case, and he manifests his opinion, both by words and actions, is he still guilty of this fearful surrender?

Besides, what will it avail him to leave our communion, since our opinion still pursues him; and though he should retire to the ends of the earth, we shall still continue to think "he has not fulfilled the law of Christ in the very point in which he believes himself to have fulfilled it." There is no conceivable remedy; he must digest the affront as he can; but why he should feel it so insupportable, only in the case of our proposing to "receive" him, is passing strange, except the author supposes him to be of so canine a temper as to be the most dangerous when most caressed.

It is amusing to see the happy versatility of the author, and with what dexterity he can adapt his viands to the taste and palate of every guest. When it was his object to load with all possible odium the conduct of the baptists, in admitting the members of other denominations, he professes to discern an essential disparity betwixt their conduct and ours. We, he tells us, are "more to blame than the pædobaptists that join with us: they surrender no principle: they do not unite with those whom *they* deem unbaptized."* He was then all intent on reproaching us; when he has to deal with the pædobaptists, he feels no scruple in awarding them the same measure. "The inquiry," he says, "will irresistibly arise, if they really and heartily believe that infant baptism is an institution of Christ, Why do they wish to unite with people by whom one of his institutions is, in their view, so manifestly opposed? How can they, in justice to their families, unite with baptists?" "Let them," he says on another occasion, "consider whether they act wisely, or *consistently*, if they join with baptists, who receive them on these grounds. If, on their part, it is connected with a *sacrifice of principle*, they will confess that it is indefensible."† By these grounds, he means, on the supposition that baptism is not an essential prerequisite to communion, which, he is aware, is

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 68. † P. 114.

the principle on which we rest our vindication, and which is certainly perfectly consistent with their conviction of *our* being baptized; the very circumstance he urged before as a proof that they *sacrificed no principle.*

From a writer who so palpably contradicts himself, it were vain to expect any information on this branch of the subject; since it is impossible to conjecture whether the union of our pædobaptist brethren does, or does not, involve a surrender of principle, in the judgement of him who affirms both. On impartial inquiry, it will probably be found, that though no principle is violated on either side, as much candour is evinced on the part of pædobaptists, in consenting to a union, as on ours. If we join with those whom we are obliged to consider as unbaptized, they unite with persons who, in their judgement, repeat an ordinance which ought to be performed but once; nullify a christian institute, and deprive their children of the benefit of a salutary rite. And since the subjects of baptism are far more numerous on their system than on ours, why should they be less offended at our neglect of these, than we are at their extending the ordinance too far? Whoever attaches importance to the covenant into which God is supposed to enter with the seed of believers, must highly disapprove the conduct of the parent who withholds from his offspring its instituted seal; nor is it possible for him to cherish the esteem due to him as a christian, but by imputing his conduct to involuntary error. The supposed cruelty, also, of refusing to insert an innocent babe into the Abrahamic stock; the impiety of profaning a christian sacrament by rebaptizing, might be made the subject of tragic declamation, with as much propriety as *their* want of "reverence to the authority of Christ, and disobedience to the laws of his house." If we must tolerate none who are guilty of omitting a divine law, (which is the doctrine of Mr. Kinghorn,) how is it possible for a pædobaptist to bear with us, who live in the perpetual neglect of what his principles compel him to consider in that light?

In the judgement of all other denominations, while

we neglect to dedicate our offspring to God in the solemnization of a federal rite, however conscientious we may be, we can but very imperfectly imitate the example of Abraham, of whom the Omniscient testified that he "would command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord;" or that of Zechariah and Elisabeth, "who walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless." On a fair comparison, it is difficult to determine which party is most entitled to the praise of candour; where both evince a noble oblivion of minor partialities and attachments, made to yield to the force of christian charity, and disappear before the grandeur of the common salvation.

PART III.

IN WHICH THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE REPLY MR. KINGHORN HAS MADE TO THE PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS URGED FOR MIXED COMMUNION IS EXPOSED.

CHAP. VII.

His Reply to the Argument deduced from the Scriptural Injunction of Mutual Forbearance and Brotherly Love, considered.

RELUCTANT as the author is to prolong the present controversy to a tedious length, he can neither do justice to his cause, nor to himself, unless he notices the attempt which his opponent has made to enervate the force of his arguments: and here he will be under the necessity of recurring to the principal topics insisted upon in the former treatise.

That dissensions in the christian church were not unknown in the earliest period of christianity, is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul, who employed himself much in attempting to compose them; and the principal method he adopted was, to enjoin mutual forbearance, to inculcate the duty of putting the most favourable construction on each other's sentiments, and not suffer these differences to alienate their affections from each other, "whom Christ had received," who were his accepted servants, and would be permitted to share in his glory.* From these

* Rom. xiv. 1—6.

premises we argue thus: Since St. Paul assigned as a reason for the mutual forbearance of Christians, that they were equally accepted of Christ, it was undoubtedly a *sufficient* one, and, admitting it to be such, it must extend to all who are in the same predicament (who are in the same state of acceptance); and, as it is allowed on both sides, that pædobaptists are in a state of salvation, and consequently accepted of Christ, the same reason which dictated the measure of toleration at that period, must apply with equal force to the debate which at present subsists between us and other denominations. In this argument the conclusion seems so nearly identified with the premises, that we might suppose the most artful sophistry would despair of confuting it, and that the only objection it were liable to, would be its attempting to prove what is self-evident.

Let us now turn to Mr. Kinghorn. It was observed in my former treatise, that the question is not, What were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate? but, What is the *ground* on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the pædobaptists? After quoting this passage, he subjoins, "*this is the question at issue*, and the decision of this will determine whether the spirit of the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedents, especially when such precedents arose from obedience to a divine command."* He then proceeds to investigate the precise nature of the dissensions which prevailed in the primitive churches; from whence he infers that the disparity betwixt them, and our controversy with the pædobaptists, is such, that the principle on which the apostles enforced toleration, is not "applicable." The expression he here employs, is somewhat equivocal. It may either mean, that the phrase "God hath received him," does not apply to the pædobaptists, or that, supposing it does, it is not sufficient to sustain the inference we deduce, which is their right to fellowship. To interpret his meaning in the latter sense, however, would be to suppose him guilty of impeaching the validity of St. Paul's argument, who rests the obligation of forbearance with the party whose cause he advocates, precisely on that ground. "*For* God hath received him." It is also inconsistent with his own statement, as given in the following passage, where he paraphrases the words just quoted in the following manner:—"There is nothing in the gospels, but what the Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and, therefore, since God does not reject them, but receives them into the christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then, he adds, he receives them on their *believing and obeying the gospel;* and it is neither stated nor supposed that he receives them, notwithstanding they disobey it. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."* We have here an explicit avowal that he considers none besides the baptists as received of Christ, in the sense the apostle intends, accompanied with a concession, that to prove they were, would furnish an irrefragable argument for our practice.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 40.

It was certainly not without reason that he apologized for taking different ground from Mr. Booth; for here he is directly at issue with the venerable apologist. *He* frankly acknowledges the fact which Mr. Kinghorn challenges us to prove; but attempts to evade the conclusion by remarking, "that it is not every one that is received of Jesus Christ, who is entitled to communion at his table, but such, and such only, as revere his authority,"† &c. Amidst the contradictory statements of such formidable champions, who can only agree in their censures of us, while they are at variance among themselves respecting the most fundamental points—where one tells us we are not to commune with other denominations, though they *are* received by Christ, and the other because they are *not* received,—what course must he, who looks up with profound veneration to these great authorities, take? Where both propose to conduct him to the same place,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 45. † Ibid. p. 62.

but one directs him to the east, the other to the west, my humble advice is, to believe neither, but to exercise that liberty of thinking for himself, to which he is strongly invited by the perplexity and confusion of his guides.

Our present concern, however, is with Mr. Kinghorn, who denies that pædobaptists are received by Christ, in the sense which St. Paul intended in the passage under consideration; while he agrees with us, that it is upon that principle that primitive toleration rested.

Let it be remembered that, while Mr. Booth interprets the word *received*, as signifying received into the divine favour, Mr. Kinghorn contends for its meaning admitted into the church. But since many things must of necessity precede the act of external communion, and every believer must be supposed, in some important sense, to be previously received of Christ, he qualifies, or explains his former language, by adding, "he receives them into the christian dispensation."*

Let me crave the indulgence of the reader, while we endeavour to sift this matter to the bottom.

1. Whatever disparity may be contended for between the ancient dissensions and the modern dispute with the pædobaptists, it can by no means amount to a proof that

* For the satisfaction of the reader, who may not possess Mr. Kinghorn's book, it may be proper to give the whole passage to which my reply is directed.

"Besides, the expression, God hath received him, ver. 8, deserves consideration. It clearly applies, as it is stated by the apostle, to the reception of the Gentiles; and is an argument with the Jewish christians, not to reject those brethren who eat all things. And suppose it to be granted that the expression applies to both parties, (which appears intended in chap. xv. 7) the sense, then, is evidently this, God receives not Gentiles *only*, but *also* Jews into the christian church, though they are encumbered with their Jewish prejudices. There is nothing in the gospel but what Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and, therefore, since God does not reject them, but receives them into the christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then he receives them *on their believing and obeying the gospel*, and it is neither stated or supposed that he receives them *notwithstanding they disobey it*. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 45.

the latter are *not* comprehended under the clause in question (God hath received him). To reason thus—there were certain errors among the primitive professors which did not bar their admission into the church, but the error of the pædobaptist is of a very different kind, and therefore it must have that effect—would be to reason most inconclusively; since all that can be justly inferred is, that it possibly *may* have that effect, though the former had not, the utmost point to which the argument, from the dissimilarity of the two cases, is capable of being carried is, that the latter may possibly not be comprehended under the same rule: but whether our author has not disqualified himself from urging it, will be the subject of future inquiry.

2. The medium by which he attempts to establish his conclusion, is manifestly untenable, unless he chooses to retract a large portion of his treatise. His argument is this, that God receives "such, and only such, as believe and obey the gospel;" but *other denominations* disobey it, and are therefore not entitled to that privilege. Here, however, he is at issue with a greater than Booth—with the apostles themselves, one of whom declares that Christ "will appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that *obey not the gospel*;" and another, classes such as *obey it not*, among the "ungodly and sinners," whom he solemnly warns of their fearful end. Either, then, the apostles were wrong, in denouncing destruction on such as *do not obey* the gospel; or Mr. Kinghorn, in loading the pædobaptists with that charge, while he expresses a confidence of their salvation. Nor will it avail him, in the least, to say they do not obey it perfectly; for we should feel no hesitation in retorting the charge, and affirming that, had he done so, he would not have penned this passage.

3. As he must, on his system, distinguish betwixt being in a state of salvation, and "*being received into the christian dispensation*," there are a few questions, to which we should be glad to receive an explicit answer. He will acknowledge, we presume, that every believer is first united to Christ, and received by him, before he is

entitled to the external communion of his church; that his right to the latter is founded on the credible evidence he gives of his interest in the first of these privileges. If this be admitted, it must hold equally true respecting the Jewish and Gentile converts, whose mutual toleration is enjoined in the passage under dispute. Now, I ask, *according to what dispensation* were these primitive believers united to Christ, and accepted of him, *previous* to their external communion? Was it according to the christian dispensation, or some other? If the reply is, the christian; I ask again, are our pædobaptist brethren in possession of the same privileges as were enjoyed by the primitive converts, before their external communion with the church? If they are not, they are not entitled to the appellation of christians in any sense, and consequently could not be admitted to communion, even though they were baptized. If, on the other hand, it is acknowledged that they are possessed of the same privileges, the question returns, *by what dispensation* are they held? If he denies it to be by the christian, I ask once more, how he acquired this persuasion of their possessing the privileges in question? He surely will not pretend to have obtained it in any other way than by an attentive perusal of the New Testament, by comparing the character of pious pædobaptists with that of the primitive christians, as well as with the marks and criterions by which it has directed us to judge of a state of salvation; so that the favourable opinion he professes to entertain, must rest on the evidence which the principles of the christian dispensation supply. But to say that the maxims of that dispensation oblige him to believe that a class of persons are interested in its promises, whom that very dispensation does not comprehend, although they live under it, is a contradiction in terms. It is equivalent to asserting, that the gospel economy passes opposite sentences on the same persons, and affords evidence for their seclusion and admission, at one and the same moment. It seems evident to a demonstration, then, that agreeable to his own concessions, *other denominations* as well as our own, are

received into the christian dispensation; that by virtue of its essential principles, they are entitled to its immunities and privileges, and have consequently a right to the external communion of saints, on a double account; first, because such communion is one of its distinguishing benefits, and next, because they are included amongst the persons whom the Head of the church has received, which our author interprets, by being admitted into the christian dispensation.

For the same reason, all that he has said elsewhere, of our not being authorized, by the New Testament, to recognise them as the disciples of Christ, necessarily falls to the ground; for, since he can have no pretence for believing them in a state of salvation, except on the information derived from the New Testament, which certainly promises salvation to none but Christ's disciples; we are not only allowed but impelled by that highest authority, to recognise them under that character. His attempt to nullify their profession is also rendered completely abortive; for, not to repeat what was before urged, since they profess neither more nor less than to adhere to the christian dispensation, it will not be denied, that, if they are actually received into it, that profession is valid.

Let it be remembered, that, in deducing these consequences, we have allowed him to interpret the disputed phrase in his own way, without contending for the sense which is most agreeable to the context, as well as most favourable to our hypothesis; and without attempting to impugn the accuracy of his representation, of the dissensions and disputes which occasioned the injunction, and gave scope to the exercise of primitive forbearance.

4. Though that inquiry might be well spared, without injury to our argument, yet his account of these ancient controversies is so egregiously partial, so palpably designed to serve an hypothesis, that truth forbids me to suffer it to pass without animadversion. In a long and perplexed dissertation, he endeavours to establish a distinction between indulging a needless scrupulosity in doing what is not commanded, and disobeying an ex-

press precept; contending that the errors which St. Paul tolerated were of the former sort, and that, as they merely respected certain observances and customs neither forbidden nor enjoined, they were to be considered as *αδιαφορα*, things indifferent, about which the christian religion is silent. He compares them to disputes about the planetary system, where it is free for every person to form his own judgement, and either to believe with the vulgar that the sun literally moves round the earth every four-and-twenty hours, or the earth round the sun, agreeable to the principles of modern astronomy.*

In order to elucidate the question before us, it will be proper briefly to state the different modes of proceeding adopted by the Jewish converts respecting the Mosaic ceremonies, at the earliest period of Christianity. That they were universally practised by believers of Jewish extraction is manifest from various parts of scripture; and, with respect to the church at Jerusalem, is expressly affirmed by St. James. "Thou seest, brother," said he, addressing Paul, "how many thousand Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous for the law." The apostle of the Gentiles, with all his zeal in the assertion of their liberties, conformed to them himself; partly

* "The case is very similar," he says, "to the following:—At no great distance of time back, the popular opinion was, that the earth was a fixed body, and that the sun and stars made not an apparent, but an actual revolution round the earth. The contrary appeared so unlikely, so contrary to daily observation, that numbers knew not how to admit it. Some reasoned; others took a shorter way, and laughed at what they thought was absurd; another party appealed to the Bible as settling the point, by asserting that the sun *did* rise, and *did* set, and on one distinguished day was commanded to stand still. Good men were to be found on both sides of the question. Suppose now that some serious characters in the christian church, tenacious believers that the *earth stood still*, and that it was the *sun* that *moved*, had occasioned a little unpleasant controversy with some of their brethren that were better informed: and the latter, provoked at their remarks, were for excommunicating them for want of sense, if not for want of religion, how fitly would the apostle's reasoning apply! It might be said, exactly on these principles, these good men are not chargeable with breaking *any divine law*—their whole crime is that they are bad astronomers, and talk nonsense; but 'God hath received them;' do you therefore receive them in the spirit of meekness and love."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, pp. 49, 50.

from respect to the Jewish people, whom he was most anxious, by every lawful compliance, to conciliate, and partly from a tender consideration of the infirmities of his weaker brethren, not yet sufficiently confirmed in the freedom of the gospel. "To the Jews he became a Jew, that he might win the Jews." But while he displayed this amiable and condescending spirit, he never disguised his conviction, that the obligation attached to the Mosaic rites was dissolved, and that the gospel was alone a perfect rule of faith and practice.

Thus far an attention to the law was justifiable, and founded on the most enlightened principles. Many, however, probably the great majority, proceeded a step farther, and observed the legal ceremonies, not as the dictate of prudence, or for the purpose of conciliation, but as matter of conscience, conceiving them to be still in force. These composed that class of believers who are denominated *weak*, whose infirmities the *strong*, christians of a more enlightened order, were commanded to bear with. The error which these persons maintained was of serious magnitude; for, in the very face of an inspired apostle, who affirmed the law of Moses to be abrogated and annulled by the advent of Christ, they still pertinaciously adhered to it, as a matter of personal and indispensable obligation; and, though they attempted to revive and perpetuate an antiquated system, an economy which the gospel had completely superseded, and which went, by no circuitous route, to impeach the sufficiency and perfection of the latter, their complete toleration was solemnly and repeatedly enjoined on their more enlightened brethren.

This error is compared by Mr. Kinghorn to an erroneous system of astronomy, and is consequently considered as totally indifferent. But how he could possibly believe this himself, or hope to obtrude it on the credulity of his readers, is astonishing. To attach the sanction of religion to a system which the Supreme Legislator had repealed—to scruple various kinds of meat, at the very moment that St. Paul was testifying the Lord Jesus had shown him that nothing was unclean of itself; and after

Peter had proclaimed the vision by which he was instructed that the distinction of clean and unclean was abolished, betrayed a degree of superstitious weakness and pertinacity, most foreign from a mistake on a merely scientific subject. Were a converted Jew at present to determine to adhere to the Mosaic ritual, I would ask Mr. Kinghorn whether he would consider his conduct as entitled to the same indulgence as though he scrupled to adopt the Newtonian system of the universe?

Still he will reply, that his error is of a different kind from that of the pædobaptists; he is guilty of no omission of a revealed duty, while they set aside a positive institute of christianity. It is by this distinction, and by this alone, that he attempts to evade the conclusion to which this example conducts us. There is nothing, however, in reason or in scripture from which we can infer, that to omit a branch of duty, not understood, is less an object of forbearance, than to maintain the obligation of abrogated rites. Let him assign, if he is able, a single reason why it is less criminal to add to, than to take away from the law of Christ; to revive an obsolete economy, than to mistake the meaning of a New Testament institute. How will he demonstrate will-worship to be less offensive to God than the involuntary neglect of a revealed precept? It is so much more difficult to prove than to assert, that we commend his discretion in choosing the easier task.

The above distinction is not only unfounded in the nature of things—it is at direct variance with the reasoning of Paul on the subject. He enjoins the practice of forbearance, on the ground of the *conscientiousness* of the parties concerned, on the assumption, not only of their general sincerity, but of their being equally actuated, in the very particulars in which they differed, by an unfeigned respect to the authority of Christ; and as he urges the same consideration as the ground on which the toleration of both parties rested, it must have included a *something* which was binding on the conscience of each, whatever was his private judgement of the points in debate. The Jew was as much bound to tolerate the

Gentile, as the Gentile the Jew. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. He that observeth a day, observeth it to the Lord: he that observeth not a day, observeth it not to the Lord. He that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not; he that eateth, eateth to the Lord." Now in the judgement of the Jew, still attached to the Mosaic rites, he who made no distinction of meats, or of days, must have been considered as violating or neglecting a precept still in force, or the injunction to refrain from judging him would have been devoid of meaning. He must have consequently been regarded by him in precisely the same light in which our pædobaptist brethren are considered, that is, as violating, though not intentionally, a positive institute. Still St. Paul absolutely insists on the duty of forbearance; and arguing with him on his own principles, he tells him he has no authority whatever to "*judge*," or deem him unworthy of his fellowship, since he was accepted of Christ, and acted with perfect good conscience in the particular which gave offence. I will leave the impartial reader to determine whether this is not a fair representation of Paul's reasoning, and whether, admitting this, it does not completely annihilate the distinction Mr. Kinghorn attempts to establish, and decide the present controversy as satisfactorily as if it had been penned for the purpose. It is scarcely possible to suppose he will stoop to avail himself of his only remaining subterfuge, by reminding us that, in the instance before us, the ordinance supposed to be violated was not a *christian* one; since it is obvious that the commands of God, supposing them still in force, are equally binding, at whatever period they are promulgated, or to whatever economy they belong.

It is not, be it remembered, by a peremptory decision of the controversy, or by assigning the victory to one in preference to the other, that the apostle attempts to effect a reconciliation. He endeavours to bring it about while each retains his peculiar sentiments; from which it is

manifest that there was nothing in the views of either party which, in his judgement, formed a legitimate barrier to union. The attachment of the Jew to the observation of the legal ceremonies was not, in his opinion, a sufficient reason for refusing to unite with him by whom they were disregarded. But in this case, the forbearance which he enjoins was exercised towards a class of persons exactly in the same situation, as far as its principle is concerned, with the modern pædobaptist, that is, towards persons who violated a precept which was still supposed to be in force; and this consequence equally results, whatever statement may be made of the precise object of Jewish toleration, whether it involved disputed practices among the Jews themselves, or the neglect of the Mosaic ritual by the Gentiles. Hence, in whatever possible view the controversy may be considered, the apostle's treatment of it goes to the complete annihilation of the distinction betwixt the observation of what *is not* and the neglect of what *is* commanded; since the *mutual* toleration which was prescribed embraced both.

There was a third description of Jews who attempted to impose the yoke of ceremonies on Gentiles, "assuring them that unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved." It was this which occasioned the convention of the apostles and elders with the church at Jerusalem, where it was solemnly decided that Gentile converts should enjoy a perfect immunity from legal observances. This formal determination, however, was far from putting an end to the controversy: the efforts of Jewish zealots were probably repressed for a time, but they soon recovered their resolution, and artfully propagated their doctrines with great success in various quarters, and especially among the churches planted in Galatia. On this occasion Paul expressed himself with great vehemence, telling the Galatians that he "could wish that those who troubled them were cut off." By inculcating the law as an indispensable prerequisite to salvation, they annulled the grace of God, subverted the truth of the gospel, and impeached the sufficiency and validity of the great propitiation. The attempt to place the rites of an economy which, while it continued, was merely the shadow of good things to come, upon a footing with the living eternal verities of the gospel, was in effect to obscure its lustre, and debase its character. That no indulgence was shown towards the inventors and propagators of this pernicious heresy, is admitted; but it is equally evident that he made a wide distinction between the deceivers and the deceived, between the authors and the victims of delusion. With the last of these, he reasons, he expostulates; he warns them of the tendency of their errors, and expresses his apprehension lest he had "bestowed upon them labour in vain." He indignantly asks, who had bewitched them, that they should not obey the truth; that after beginning in the Spirit, they should end in the flesh; and when they had been replenished with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, "return again to the weak and beggarly elements." But in the midst of these pointed reproofs, as they were not fully aware of the consequences of their defection, as they were not in a confirmed state of heresy, he continued to treat them with the tenderness of a father, without uttering a breath that might seem like a threat of excommunication.

5. We shall not content ourselves with this answer. We accept Mr. Kinghorn's challenge, and engage to produce an instance of men's being tolerated in the primitive church, who neglected an express command of Christ, and that of the highest moment. We must only be allowed to assume it for granted, that the apostles were entitled, by the highest right, to be considered as members of the church which they planted, and of which they are affirmed to be the foundation. These very apostles, however, continued for a considerable time to neglect the express command of their Master, relating to a subject of the utmost importance. It will not be denied, that he expressly directed them to go forth immediately after the descent of the Spirit, and to preach the gospel to every creature. Did they immediately at-

tempt to execute this commission? From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that they did not; that for a considerable period they made no effort to publish the gospel, except to the Jews, and that it required a new revelation to determine Peter to execute this order in its full extent, by opening the door of faith to the Gentiles. But for the vision presented at Joppa, from all that appears, the preaching of the word would have been limited in perpetuity to one nation; and when Peter, moved by an immediate voice from heaven, began to impart it to Cornelius and his family, he was vehemently opposed by the church at Jerusalem. So far indeed were the primitive christians from entering into the views of their divine Master, that, when a "number of them were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, they went as far as Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the gospel to the Jews only." That highly favoured people, elated with the idea of its religious preeminence, looked down with contempt on other nations; while it appropriated the kingdom of God to itself, as its exclusive patrimony, without suspecting for a moment that it was the design of the Almighty to admit a different race of men to an equal participation of the same privileges. Under the influence of these prejudices, the first heralds of the gospel slowly and reluctantly imbibed its liberal and comprehensive spirit.

Nor is this the only instance in which Mr. Kinghorn himself will be found to approve of the toleration of such as have habitually neglected a positive command. The great majority of our own denomination, influenced principally by the writings of Gill and Brine, admirers of Crisp, held, to a very recent period, that it was improper to urge sinners to repentance, or to enjoin upon them the duty of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

* It is but justice to the memory of the great and excellent Fuller, to observe, that it is to his writings chiefly our denomination is indebted, for its emancipation from these miserable shackles and restraints.

The author might have added here, the name of his excellent and venerable father.—Ed.

Their practice, it is needless to add, corresponded with their theory, and they anxiously guarded against the inculcation of any spiritual duties whatever, on the unconverted. My respectable opponent is, I am aware, at a great remove from these sentiments; and the main reason he would assign for rejecting them, is, that our Saviour commenced his ministry by calling men to repent, and that "he commanded his apostles to testify every where repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But if such be his reasons, he must acknowledge that the eminent persons before mentioned, in declining to perform what our Lord commanded his apostles, neglected or broke a divine precept. But is he prepared to affirm that they were not members of the church? Will this sturdy champion of the strict baptists be ungracious enough to pass a sentence of excommunication on the majority of his precursors in this controversy? Unless he is prepared for this, he must acknowledge that the right of toleration extends to such as neglect, or violate, a revealed precept. It is unnecessary to remind the reader of the magnitude of the error in question, which would at once have annihilated the apostolic commission, by rendering it impossible to preach the gospel to *any creature*, since there were in the Gentile world none to whom it could, on this principle, be addressed. The whole ceremony of baptism sinks into insignificance in the comparison.

In answer to his challenge we have produced two cases, in which toleration has been extended to such as neglect or violate a divine precept; the first taken from the holy apostles, the second from our fathers and predecessors in our own denomination.

The reader is requested to advert to the interminable discord and dissension with which this principle is replete. The principle is, that whenever one christian deems another to live in the neglect and violation of a positive command, however conscientious he may be, he must renounce the communion of the party which he supposes erroneous. Who does not perceive, that the application

of such a principle will furnish a pretext for endless dispute and contention; that not only a different interpretation of the law of baptism will be a sufficient occasion of division, but that whoever supposes that any branch of the primitive discipline has fallen into disuse, will feel himself justified, nay, compelled, to kindle the torch of discord, and to separate chief friends? If no latitude is to be allowed in interpreting the will of Christ, no indulgence shown to such of the faithful, as from a deficiency of light, neglect and overlook some part of his precepts, how is it possible the practice of reciprocal exclusion should stop within the limits which this author has assigned it? Are there two thinking men to be found, who are fully agreed respecting all the minuter details of christian discipline and worship? Are they fully agreed on the question of what *was* the primitive discipline, much less, how far a conformity to it is either proper or practicable? Who, that is competent to speak on such subjects, is not aware, that there are no questions involved in greater obscurity than these, none on which the evidence is less satisfactory, and which more elude the researches of the learned, or administer more aliment of dispute to the contentious? One class of christians believes that a plurality of elders is essential to the organization of a church, because the scripture always speaks of them in the plural number; and confident that such is the will of Christ, he dares not recognize as a church, one in which that circumstance is wanting. Another attaches importance to weekly communion, which he justly contends was the uniform practice of the apostles, and of the primitive age: a conformity to which, in this particular, is with him an indispensable condition to communion. A third turns his eyes towards lay exhortations, the disuse of which he considers as practically superseding some of the plainest passages of scripture, quenching the Spirit, and abridging the means of religious improvement; he consequently scruples the communion of those by whom this ordinance is neglected. A fourth adverts to the solemnity with which our Lord exemplified and enjoined

the washing of feet, and the frequency with which the apostles inculcated the kiss of charity; and having no doubt that these injunctions are of perpetual obligation, feels himself necessitated to withdraw from such as by neglecting them, "walk disorderly." A fifth contends for the total independence of churches, conceiving that the cognizance of ecclesiastical causes is, by divine right, vested in the people, who are to determine every thing by a majority of votes; in opposition to those who contend for a church representative; and, believing such an arrangement to be an important branch of the will of Christ, he conscientiously refuses the communion of those societies which decline to adopt it.

These different systems are, no doubt, distinguished by different degrees of approximation to truth; but what is of importance to remark, however they may differ in other respects, they agree in this, that upon the principle we are attempting to expose, they furnish, to such as adopt them, just as reasonable a pretext for separate communion as the disagreement respecting baptism; nor is it possible, if that principle be admitted, to reconcile the independent exercise of intellect with christian unity. The instances already adduced are a mere scantling of the innumerable questions which would give occasion to a diversity of judgement respecting the mind of Christ, and consequently necessitate the withdrawment of christians from each other. The few societies that have attempted to carry this theory into practice, have already exhibited such a series of feuds and quarrels, as are amply sufficient to ensure its reprobation; and merely because they have acted more *consistently*, they have acted much worse than the greater part of the churches who practise strict communion. Let this principle be once established, and fairly acted upon, and there is no question but that divisions will succeed to divisions, and separations to separations, until two persons possessed of freedom of thought will scarcely be found capable of walking together in fellowship; and an image of the infinite divisibility of matter will be exhibited, in the breaking down of churches into smaller and smaller

portions. An admirable expedient, truly, for keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!" That there is no hyperbole in this representation will be obvious, if we do but consider the difficulty of procuring an entire unanimity in the interpretation of those parts of scripture which are supposed to relate to the will of Christ, in the organization and constitution of his church.

6. There is one important consideration to which the reader is requested to attend, before we dismiss this branch of the subject. My opponent asserts, that none besides our own denomination are comprehended within the clause in which the apostle affirms the reception of erring christians. He acknowledges, that if it can be proved that they are included under that description, the precept of toleration extends to their case, and that the only question at issue is, whether they *are* so or not, which he, in opposition to Mr. Booth, denies.* The reader is entreated seriously to consider the necessary result of this position, whether it does not amount to a repeal of the Scriptures, considered as the rule of faith and manners. It will not be denied that the promises and precepts of the New Testament are uniformly addressed to the same description of persons, with those particular injunctions under present discussion, and that under the terms *strong* and *weak*, by which are designated the two respective classes, who are commanded mutually to bear with each other. Nor can we hesitate whether the disputed phrase, *God hath received him*, ought to be interpreted in the same extent. As the inscriptions prefixed to the inspired epistles determine to whom they were addressed, so that which was written to the Romans is inscribed to "all *that* be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;" and not a syllable is found in

* The author of *Terms of Communion* observes, "that the question at issue is not what were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate, but what is the ground on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the pædobaptists." In reply to which Mr. Kinghorn sets out with remarking, "I admit *that is the question*, and the decision of this question will determine, whether the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedent," &c.

the precepts respecting mutual forbearance, comprised in the 14th and 15th chapters, which limits them to any particular part of that church, in distinction from the whole. They were intended for the universal regulation of the conduct of the members of that community towards each other.

The epistles of the rest of the apostles also, though directed to the inhabitants of different places from that to the Romans, are uniformly ascribed to the same description of persons, as will be manifest on their inspection; or, in other words, the supposed genuine followers of Christ in that age, are the persons to whom the epistolary parts of the New Testament are directed; and consequently, universal precepts enjoined on any one society, must have been considered as equally binding on all the faithful. On any other supposition, each church would have possessed a distinct code, instead of the inspired writings at large being regarded as the universal rule of faith and practice. Hence it follows that the seven churches of Asia, as well as those who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia, supposing them acquainted with the Epistle to the Romans, would have been under the same obligation of observing its injunctions with the christians at Rome. But among the various precepts intended to regulate the conduct of christians, comprised in the code of inspiration, such as enjoin mutual forbearance with each other's imperfections and infirmities, hold a conspicuous place, and the rule propounded on that occasion we perceive to have been universally obligatory on believers of that generation.

When we propose to extend the same method of proceeding to our pædobaptist brethren, in the present day, we are repelled; and my opponent reminds us, that we are not authorized to assign, in the present case, the reason for forbearance which was urged by St. Paul, because *they are not received*, in the sense which he intended. The reason itself, he acknowledges, would be a sufficient justification, could the fact on which it proceeds be established, but he denies the fact.

Their error, it is asserted, is of such a nature, that it places them totally out of the question, and whatever is said on the subject of mutual forbearance in the New Testament, is, in the present state of things, to be considered as applicable merely to the conduct of baptists toward each other; from which it necessarily follows, that no part of the precepts or promises of scripture can be proved to apply to the great body of believers, at present, not even to such as appear pre-eminent in piety; for all these precepts and promises were originally addressed precisely to the same description of persons, with the injunctions in question; and as it is contended that *these* belong at present only to baptists, by parity of reason, the former must be restricted to the same limits. On this principle, there is not a syllable in the New Testament from which a pædobaptist can derive either consolation or direction, as a christian; not a single promise which he can claim, nor a single duty resulting from the christian calling with which he is concerned; for the class of persons to whom these were originally addressed, was one and the same with those on whom the duty of mutual forbearance was inculcated.

The inscription of the Epistle to the Romans is of the same extent with the injunctions contained in the 14th and 15th chapters, and no greater; the same description of persons are evidently addressed throughout. It was the *saints*, the *beloved of God*, mentioned in the beginning of the letter, who, on account of their common relation to the Lord, were commanded to bear with each other's infirmities. Now, if it be asserted that infant baptism is an error so different from those which were contemplated by the Author, in that injunction, that its abettors stand excluded from its benefit, how will it be possible to prove that they are *saints*, that they are *beloved of God*, or that any of the attributes ascribed to christians in that epistle, belong to *them*? Mr. Kinghorn may affirm, if he pleases, that the characteristic descriptions are applicable, while the injunctions under discussion are not. He may affirm, but how will he prove it? since both are addressed to the same persons, and the injunction of forbearance enjoined alike on them all.

From a letter, consisting partly of affectionate congratulations, and partly of serious advice, both intended for the comfort and direction of the same persons, to infer that the congratulations apply to Christians of all denominations, and the advice to one only, is capricious and unreasonable. The same conclusion holds good respecting the whole of the New Testament. Whatever is affirmed in any part of it respecting the privilege of primitive believers, was asserted primarily of such only as were baptized, because there were no others originally in the church; all the reciprocal duties of christians were, in the first instance, enjoined on these; among which we find precepts enforcing, without a shadow of limitation, the duty of cultivating christian fellowship. But the last, our opponents contend, are to be restricted to baptists; whence it necessarily follows, unless we had some independent evidence on the subject, that the former must be restricted in the same manner; and that, consequently, all other denominations, however excellent in other respects, are left without any scriptural proof of their interest in the divine favour, or any directions for that part of their conduct which concerns their christian obligations. Were there, indeed, any other medium of proof besides the writings of the apostles, of equal authority, by which it were possible to supply their deficiency, the case would be different. From this independent source we might possibly learn the fact, that *other denominations*, also, were included within the promise of eternal life: but while our knowledge on the subject is derived from one book, whose precepts for the regulation of the conduct of believers towards each other universally, are affirmed not to extend to our intercourse with pædobaptists, it is impossible to establish that conclusion; for, to attempt to limit the application of scripture in one part, and to make it universal in another, where both were originally intended to be taken in the same extent, is plainly unreasonable.

CHAP. VIII.

On the Argument for Mixed Communion, founded on the Pædobaptists being a Part of the true Church.

THE author of *Terms of Communion* founded an argument for the admission of sincere christians, of every denomination, to the Lord's table, on their being a part of the true church. He remarked, that whenever that term occurs in scripture, in relation to spiritual matters, it constantly denotes, either members of a particular community, accustomed to meet in one place, or the whole body of real believers, dispersed throughout the world, but considered as united to one head; that this body is expressly affirmed to be the body of Christ, of which every genuine believer is a member; that we are seriously warned against whatever tends to promote a schism in it; and that these admonitions are directly repugnant to the practice, under any pretext whatever, of repelling a sincere christian from communion. If we allow the identity of the church of Christ with his body, which St. Paul expressly affirms, and which he assumes as the basis of his whole train of reasoning, the conclusion we have drawn results from it so immediately, that the attempt to place it in a clearer light seems a waste of words. If the alienation of affection which prevailed in the church at Corinth was sufficient to constitute a schism, much more is a rupture of communion. But a schism or division in the body, the apostle deprecates as one of the greatest evils, as tending immediately to its destruction, as well as most repugnant to the scope and genius of christianity. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?"* "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." Here the unity of the

* 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

church is most clearly affirmed; and whatever tends to divide it is stigmatized under the notion of an attempt to divide Christ himself.

The reader will probably feel some curiosity to know how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile his hypothesis with these statements; whether he is prepared in contradiction to the apostle, to deny the identity of the church of Christ with his body, or whether, acknowledging this, he will yet contend for the necessity of dividing it, in opposition to his solemn injunctions. He will be a little surprised at finding that he makes no reply whatever; that he is speechless, and, without attempting to rebut the argument, turns aside to other subjects, on which he contents himself with repeating what he has already asserted times without number. For what purpose he announced his intention to discuss this topic, it is not easy to conjecture; unless he flattered himself with the hope of finding some good-natured readers, who would give him credit for having done what he avowed his intention of performing. Be this as it may, not a word escapes him throughout the chapter, from which it is possible to learn whether he considers pædobaptists as a part of the church or not, the affirmation or denial of which is essentially involved in the discussion.

The only answer he attempts to the preceding reasoning is included in an assertion, the fallacy of which has already been amply exposed. "Once take away the obligation," saith he, "of conforming to the will of Christ, and the reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection, in which all parties are involved in aiding and abetting a needless and schismatical project. But if it be right to leave good men, because they have left Jesus Christ, it is right not to admit them till they come to his terms."* To which it is sufficient to reply, that to leave good men, that is, to refuse to join with them in those particulars in which we suppose them to have deviated from the will of Christ, is the necessary dictate of allegiance; but to refuse to walk with them, as far as we

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 55.

are agreed, to repel them from our communion, on account of errors and corruptions, in which we are under no necessity of participating, is a very different affair; it is an assumption of infallibility, and a deliberate invasion of the rights of conscience.

The logical force of Mr. Kinghorn's conclusion, is exactly on a footing with that of the following argument. If it be right to leave my friend when he repairs to the gaming-table, it is right not to admit him into my house, till he has relinquished the practice of gaming. If I must not go with him to the theatre, I must renounce all sort of intercourse with him, until he has abandoned theatrical amusements: a conclusion to which a stern moralist may easily be supposed to arrive, but which no correct reasoner will attempt to deduce from these premises.

That the mystical body of Christ is *one* and *one* only, and that all sincere believers are members of that body, is so clearly and unequivocally asserted in the sacred Scriptures, that it would be trifling with the reader to enter into a formal proof of a proposition, so obvious and so undeniable. The wildest heretical extravagance has never proceeded so far, as to ascribe two or more mystical bodies to the same Head, or to deny that Christ is, in that character, really and virtually united to all the faithful. It is equally certain that the term church, whenever it is applied to denote the whole number of believers diffused over the face of the earth, is identified in scripture with the body of Christ. The church is in more passages than one affirmed to be his body. "He is the head of the body, the church. Who now rejoice," saith St. Paul, "in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, *for his body's sake, which is the church.*"*

In the language of scripture, two classes of men only are recognised, believers and unbelievers, the church and the world; nor is it possible to conceive, in consistency with the dictates of inspiration, of a third. All who are

* Col. i. 18–24. Eph. v. 23, 30, 32.

in Christ are in a state of salvation; all who belong to the world, in a state of spiritual death and condemnation. "The former are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; the latter, the *whole world*, lieth in the wicked one." If we allow ourselves to imagine a description of persons, who, though truly sanctified in Christ and united to him as their Head, are yet no parts of his church, we adopt a Utopian theory, as unfounded and extravagant as the boldest fictions of romance. It is the church, and that only, if we believe the inspired writers, which "Christ so loved as to give himself for it, that he might sanctify it and cleanse it;" it is that alone, which "he will present to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle."*

It is strange that Mr. Kinghorn should not explicitly inform us, whether pædobaptists are, or are not, to be considered as a part of this universal church. This he ought certainly to have done, or have declined entering on a branch of the controversy which, he must be aware, hinges entirely on that point. If they are admitted to be a part of his church, and he still contends for their exclusion, this is formally to plead for a schism in the body; it is to justify the forcible separation of one member from another, and to destroy the very idea of its unity. On this principle, the pathetic exhortations to perfect co-operation and concord, drawn from the beautiful analogy betwixt the mystical and natural body, insisted upon in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, are completely superseded; and one member, instead of being prohibited from saying to another, "I have no need of thee," is taught to shrink from the contact, as a contamination. Whenever we are invited to concur in practices which we esteem erroneous or corrupt, our refusal to comply is justified by a principle the most obvious and the most urgent, the previous obligation of obeying God, rather than man; but if we object to a transient act of communion with a member of the body of Christ, on account of those errors or corruptions in

* Ephes. v. 27.

which we are not called to participate, we are guilty of dividing that body. The reason of my adverting to a *transient* act, is, that I am supposing the cause of separation to rest with us, and that a member of a different community proposes merely to unite in an occasional commemoration of the ineffable love of the Redeemer, without either a formal renunciation of the peculiarities of his sect, or an attempt to introduce them. In such circumstances, occasional fellowship is all that can be looked for; the adoption of different modes of worship, a predilection for different rites and ceremonies, will naturally dispose him to prefer a permanent union with professors of his own persuasion. While, in the mutual intercourse of such societies, a disposition to recognise each other as christians is cultivated, the unity of the body is preserved, notwithstanding their disagreement in particular points of doctrine, or of discipline. Owing to a diversity of judgement, respecting the proper organization of churches, obstacles, at present invincible, may prevent their incorporation; and it is left to the conscience of each individual to determine to which he will permanently unite himself. An enlightened christian will not hesitate for a moment, in declining to join with that society, whatever be the piety of its individual members, in which the terms of communion involve his concurrence in religious observances, of whose lawfulness he entertains any doubt. Hence arises, in the present state of religion, an impassable barrier to the perfect intercommunity of christian societies. But it is not upon *this ground* that my opponent objects to the practice for which we are contending. He rests his refusal to commune with members of other denominations, on the principle of their not being entitled to be *recognized as christians*. He protests against a union with them, not on account of any erroneous or superstitious observances, with which the act of fellowship is necessarily combined, but because he considers them as personally disqualified. His hypothesis is indeed so wild and incoherent, that it is difficult to state it with accuracy, or to preserve a steady conception of it in the mind. According to his theory, the pædobaptists occupy a station the most anomalous and extraordinary that ever entered the human imagination. Many of them are genuine believers, of whose exalted piety he avows the fullest conviction, yet they are not to be *recognized as christians;* they are members of the mystical body of Christ, or they could derive from him no saving influence or benefit, yet are excluded from all the advantages resulting from the union and cooperation of the several parts of which it consists; and though, as a portion of the mystical body, it is impossible to deny them a place in the *one catholic* or *universal* church, yet it is the duty of every particular church to disown and exclude them. In short, the great majority of the sincere followers of the Saviour, whose names are written in the Book of Life, are totally disqualified for performing the duties, and enjoying the privileges, which distinguish the church from the world; betwixt which they occupy some intermediate place, some *terra incognita*, whose existence it is as difficult to ascertain, as the *limbus patrum*, or a mansion in the moon. In the present state of the christian church, that extensive portion of the New Testament, which was designed to cement the affections, and to regulate the conduct of the faithful towards each other, is superseded; its precepts are in a state of suspension and abeyance, and in the midst of the Egyptian darkness which envelopes the christian world, the baptists alone dwell in the light of another Goshen. However strange these positions may appear, they form but a part of the absurdities which necessarily flow from our author's theory; not is there any possible way of evading them, but by denying that pædobaptists belong to the mystical body of Christ, or demonstrating the consistency of their exclusion with the union and cooperation which St. Paul enjoins; or by asserting the existence of more mystical bodies than one, destined to subsist apart.

CHAP. IX.

The Injustice of the Exclusion of other Denominations considered as a Punishment.

In the treatise *On Terms of Communion* it was urged, that, as exclusion from the communion of the church is the highest ecclesiastical censure which it is possible to inflict, it can only be justified on the supposition of a proportional degree of demerit in the objects of it. If the moral turpitude inherent in the practice of infant baptism is of an order which entitles it to be compared to the habitual indulgence of vice, or the obstinate maintenance of heresy, it is but fit it should be placed on the same level, and subjected to the same treatment; but, if the understanding and the heart equally revolt at such a comparison, that method of proceeding must be allowed to be unjust. To this our author replies by denying the propriety of applying the term *exclusion* to a bare refusal of admission. "Words," he informs us, "must strangely have altered their meaning before such an application of the phrase in question can be justified." To be compelled to dispute about the meaning of terms is always humiliating, but that his assertion is unfounded, is sufficiently evident, from the authority of the most eminent critics. Our great lexicographer, under the word exclude, defines it thus, "to shut out, to hinder from entrance, or admission;" exclusion he defines, "the act of shutting out, or denying admission." Thus much for Mr. Kinghorn's accuracy as a grammarian. Let us next examine his reasoning.

He denies that the act of debarring every other denomination from admission is a *punishment*—"it is not considered as such by sensible pædobaptists."* But why is it not? Solely because the baptist societies are too few and too insignificant to enable them to realise the effects of their system, in its full extent. Their princi-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 60.

ple involves an absolute interdict of church privileges to the members of every other community; but, being an inconsiderable minority, there are not wanting numerous and respectable societies, who stand ready to give a welcome reception to the outcasts, and to succour the exiles. That their rejection is not followed by its natural consequence, a total privation of the communion of saints, is not to be ascribed, in the smallest degree, to the liberality or forbearance of our opponents, but solely to their imbecility. The celebration of the eucharist they consider as null and void, when attended to by a pædobaptist; his approach to the table is absolutely prohibited within the sphere of their jurisdiction; and should their principles ever obtain a general prevalence, the commemoration of the love of a crucified Saviour would become impracticable, except to persons of their own persuasion. Instances have often occurred where the illiberal practice, against which we are contending, has been felt to be a punishment of no ordinary severity; where eminently holy men have been so situated, that the only opportunity they possessed of celebrating the passion of the Redeemer has been withheld, and they have been compelled, most reluctantly, to forego one of the most exalted privileges of the church; nor has it ever been known, that compassion for the peculiar hardship of the case was suffered to suspend the unrelenting severity of the sentence. Let me ask the advocates for the exclusive system, whether they would be moved for a moment to extend their indulgence to a solitary individual, who differed from them on the subject of baptism, although he was so circumstanced as to render a union with other classes of christians impossible?

This writer affirms, it is not *intended* as a punishment by the baptists, and strongly remonstrates against the confounding it with the sentence of excommunication, on account of immoral delinquency. He concurs with the author of *Terms of Communion* in admitting that, in these instances, its "accordance with the moral nature of man may and does give it authority and weight; in such an instance as the incestuous person at Corinth, it

becomes an instrument of punishment. He was *in* the church, and could be expelled *from* it. But which way the censure or punishment of excommunication and expulsion can take place in one who never was in a society, the strict baptists," he tells us, "have yet to learn."*

In reply to this, I shall not descend to a tedious logomachy, farther than just to remark, that this writer has, on the present occasion, fallen into a similar error respecting the meaning of words with his former. Excommunication is synonymous with exclusion, and is defined, by the highest authority, "an ecclesiastical interdict; exclusion from the fellowship of the church."† The punishment it involves is exactly proportioned to the value of the privilege it withholds; and, therefore, to affirm that it is not a punishment, is equivalent to the assertion that the fellowship of the church is not a benefit. To withhold privileges and immunities from him who is legally entitled to their possession, must be supposed to be felt with a severity proportioned to the justice of his title, and the magnitude and extent of his privations.

By refusing to admit a pædobaptist to the privilege of communion with *us*, we, in fact, affirm his incompetence to commune any where; we deprive him, as far as our influence extends, of all the advantages which result from the fellowship of the saints; and that he is not reduced to the situation of an outcast and an exile from the church, is in no degree to be imputed to the lenity of our decision, but to the limitation of our power. It is surely not necessary to multiply words, to prove that the equity of every judicial sentence must be ascertained, by considering it as it is *in itself*, by exploring its tendency, not by adverting to a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, which may possibly mitigate or extinguish the evils with which it is fraught. In the present instance, we must, in order to form an accurate judgement, make the supposition, that the sentence of

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 60. † See Johnson.

excommunication actually operates, in its full extent, so as to deprive the subject of it of all the consolation and benefit resulting from the union of christians; we must suppose that no asylum is left to which he can retreat, no community remaining where he can hide his humiliation, and his shame. For that there is any, is solely to be ascribed to the prevalence of a system which our opponents are accustomed to stigmatize as erroneous, and for the existence of which it is not to be imagined, therefore, they will assume to themselves the smallest credit. Let us imagine, what Mr. Kinghorn will, probably, be among the first to anticipate, that the sentiments of the baptists triumphed to such an extent, as to be embraced by dissenting churches in general, and that the opposite views were retained only by a few individuals; let us suppose one of the latter description to possess the zeal, the humility, the devotion of a Brainerd, and that, on account of his being unable to perceive the nullity of infant baptism, he were shut out from every religious society within his reach, though acknowledged to possess an elevation of character which threw the virtues of others into the shade; would there be no hardship, no injustice, in this case? Would it be sufficient to silence the murmurs of indignation to remark, that it was not *intended as a punishment*, that he had nothing to complain of; for "as he was never *in* the church, he could not be expelled *from* it?" Would such cold and trivial subtleties, were they as correct as they are erroneous, quell the instinctive cry of justice, demanding a satisfactory reason for placing the friend and the enemy of God, the devoted servant of Christ and the avowed despiser of the great salvation, on the same level, and comprehending them in one and the same sweeping censure? If these characters are totally opposed, not merely by the contrast exhibited between the vices of the world and the virtues it is most prone to admire, but in consequence of the possession, by one of the parties, of supernatural and sanctifying grace, where is the equity of confounding them together by the interdict of religious privileges? and if the door is opened, at the same time,

for the admission into the church of persons of a character decidedly inferior, how can impartial justice be asserted to hold the scale, and determine the merits of the respective candidates;—justice, whose office it is to appreciate the rival claims of competitors, and to impart to every one his due? The iniquity of such a mode of procedure is so obvious and striking, that it is no wonder we find our opponents exert their ingenuity to the utmost in attempting to palliate and disguise it, though the issue of their attempts is only to plunge them deeper in perplexity and contradiction.

The author of *Terms of Communion* had remarked, "that there was no difference with respect to the present inquiry, betwixt the refusal of a candidate, and the expulsion of a member, since nothing could justify the former of these measures, which might not be equally alleged in vindication of the latter. *Both* amount to a declaration of the parties being unworthy to communicate." To this Mr. Kinghorn replies, by observing that "in one case the party is declared unworthy from *moral delinquency;* in the other, he is not declared *unworthy*, but *unqualified*." Here it is plainly conceded that pædobaptists are not refused on a *moral* ground; whence it necessarily follows, that even supposing they were acquitted from all blame in practising infant baptism, their exclusion would still be justifiable. They are not repelled from the sacrament, it seems, on account of any breach of duty of which they are guilty; for to assert this, would be to contradict himself, by resting their exclusion on their *moral delinquency*. They incur the forfeiture of all the privileges of the church, for no fault whatever; and whether they be perfectly free from blame or not, in the adoption of an unauthorized rite, is a consideration totally foreign to the question, and it is not to be taken into the account, in assigning the reasons for their non-admission. Let the candid reader seriously ponder this extraordinary concession; let him ask himself, whether he is prepared to believe that, in consistence with the genius of the gospel, the most extensive forfeiture of religious immunities can be incurred without guilt, and the heaviest ecclesiastical censure inflicted on the innocent. He will doubtless reject such a supposition with unmingled disgust; he will feel no hesitation in deciding, that the error which prohibits a church from *recognising* the person to whom it is ascribed, *as a christian*, which Mr. Kinghorn expressly applies to infant baptism, must incur a high degree of culpability in the eyes of him "who judgeth righteous judgement."

The glaring inconsistency of this whole statement with the preceding assertions of the same writer, is palpable and obvious. He entirely concurs with Mr. Booth, in characterizing pædobaptists as persons, "who do not revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, nor obey the laws of his house." But will he attempt to distinguish this charge from that of moral delinquency? Again, quoting the declaration of St. Paul, that "the kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," he adds, "now as far as the kingdom of God consists in *righteousness*, it must include obedience to practical precepts, both moral and positive.* We have an eminent instance of submission to John's baptism being called righteousness by our Lord." But if the pædobaptists are justly chargeable with want of *righteousness*, and on that account are not entitled to christian fellowship, they must certainly be excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*. If, on the other hand, the deficiency of righteousness involved in the practice of infant baptism, is not sufficient to justify such a treatment, the reasoning in the above passage is utterly futile. By denying that they are excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*, at the same time that he imputes to them conduct highly criminal, he has involved himself in inextricable difficulties; since, supposing it could be proved to a demonstration, that they did "not revere the authority of Christ," &c., he has deprived himself of the power of urging it in vindication of his system, by protesting against the supposition of

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 46.

his resting its operation on moral considerations. But if no guilt is implied in these charges, why are they adduced? and if there be, how is that to be distinguished from moral delinquency? He tells us they are not *unworthy*, but only *disqualified;* whence it follows that, in his opinion, he may be worthy of communion, who "does not revere the authority of Christ;" nor would it be possible to dispute his title, were he but *qualified.*

In adopting this system, he professes to obey the directions and to imitate the conduct of the Supreme Legislator, whom he affirms not to have received the unbaptized into the gospel dispensation. If this profession is sincere, he surely will not deny that it is his intention to proceed on the same grounds, and act from the same motive, with the great Head of the church.

But when, by refusing to admit them into the christian dispensation, he virtually declares them *disqualified*, which is the doctrine of this writer, is it under the character of *innocent persons*, or of delinquents? Will he affirm that the benefits of that economy are withheld from any who have, by no act, deserved that privation? Is the sentence by which their disqualification is incurred capricious and arbitrary, or is it merited? To say it is not, would be impious; and to affirm that it *is*, is to contradict himself by founding it, after all, on moral considerations, or, which is perfectly equivalent, on "moral delinquency."

The distinction, then, which he has attempted to establish betwixt being *unworthy*, and being *disqualified*, is perfectly nugatory; and the persons to whom it is applied, though they may not be *unworthy* in other respects, must be acknowledged to be such, on account of that particular instance of disobedience for which they are disqualified. Their disobedience places them on a footing with other classes of delinquents, by shutting them out from the communion of saints. They incur the same forfeiture, and for the same general reason, want of practical compliance with the will of Christ. They are defective, to use this author's own language, in

the *righteousness* of the kingdom; and, though they possess faith, they fail in exhibiting obedience.

The objections formerly urged against this system, consequently return in their full force. Since the exclusion of pædobaptists must, after every possible evasion, be founded on their supposed demerits, if these are necessarily and intrinsically equal to the moral imperfections which are tolerated in baptist societies, it is just. If, among the millions who have practised infant baptism, the most eminent saint whom past ages have produced is to be considered as more criminal on that account than the crowd of imperfect christians whom we admit without scruple into our churches, the charge of injustice must be relinquished. Unless this can be sustained, it remains undiminished and unimpaired.

The method by which Mr. Kinghorn attempts to parry this reasoning is a recurrence to his old sophism, which consists of confounding together things totally distinct, namely, a refusal to *partake* in objectionable rites, with the exclusion of such as embrace them from our communion. Here he takes occasion to affirm, that the same objection may be made to our secession from the Romish, as from the established church.*

Did we repel men of unquestionable piety on account of their avowed attachment to the peculiarities of a sect or party, there would be a propriety in identifying our practice with that of our opponents; for in that case we

* "The imposition of rites," says Mr. Kinghorn, "which Christ has not commanded, and the combination of those sentiments with the structure of the church, which we think injurious to its nature, and contrary to the will of the Lord, have rendered it necessary for us to establish *a separate communion*. Here the fact is, that we feel ourselves called upon to say, that we can have no fellowship with them in communion at the Lord's table. On this ground it would be a very easy thing to represent the conduct of protestants and of protestant dissenters, in the same dark colouring as Mr. Hall has applied to the strict baptists. Let a man of talent exclaim against them for departing from the *true church;* and represent their conduct in establishing a communion of their own, as declaring in the strongest form, that they deem others unworthy of their society, and that in so doing they pronounce the sentence of expulsion, &c.; and he will do no more than Mr. Hall has done in the whole of this part of his reasoning."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 63.

should both act on the same principle. But in refusing to join in a communion accompanied by appendages which we conscientiously disapprove, we proceed on a totally *different* ground. We recede just as far as a moral necessity dictates, and no farther. Nor is it true, as this writer asserts, that this mode of proceeding implies as severe a censure on the societies from which we dissent, as the practice which we are opposing inflicts on pædobaptists. He who conceives that the posture of kneeling is an unauthorized innovation on the primitive mode of celebrating the eucharist, must necessarily dissent from the church which prescribes it: but will it be affirmed that his doing so implies a conviction that the adherents to that rite are universally disqualified for fellowship, that they are not entitled to be acknowledged christians, or that they are so deficient in the *righteousness* in which the kingdom of God consists, as to invalidate their profession, and exclude them from the christian dispensation? But these are the charges urged against the pædobaptists. Let the smallest error imaginable be so incorporated with the terms of communion that an explicit assent to it is implied in that act, and he who discerns it to be an error must, if he is conscientious, dissent, and establish a separate communion: but are there any prepared to assert, that this is precisely the same thing as to repel the person who embraces it from the Lord's table? I am weary and ashamed of being under the necessity of occupying the reader's attention with the exposure of such obvious fallacies. Suffice it to remark, once for all, that our dissent from the establishment is founded on the necessity of departing from a communion to which certain corruptions, in our apprehension, inseparably adhere; while we welcome the pious part of that community to that celebration of the eucharist which we deem unexceptionable. We recede from *their* communion from necessity, but we feel no scruple in admitting them to *ours;* while our strict brethren reject them, as well as every other description of pædobaptists, altogether. On him who has not discernment to perceive, or

candour to acknowledge, the difference betwixt these methods of proceeding, all further reasoning would be wasted.

One more evasion must be noticed before we conclude this part of the subject. "The pædobaptists are represented as chargeable with nothing more than a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute. But this, it is observed, is *not* the question before us: the present controversy relates to the *institute itself.* It is *not* whether the members of a church have fully and properly conceived the nature of the institute to which they have submitted. If this were the case, we might be represented as expelling the ignorant and the weak, instead of instructing and encouraging them. But it is, whether an institute delivered by Christ is to be maintained, or to be given up."*

To this I reply: The advocates of infant baptism are either sincerely of opinion that the rite in question ought to be extended to infants, or they are guilty of prevarication. If there be any of the last description to be found, they are entirely out of the question; for, supposing their character ascertained, they have never been contemplated as proper objects of toleration. With respect to the former, who sincerely believe it was the intention of our Lord to extend the rite of baptism to the infant seed of believers, is it possible for them to act otherwise than they do? With what then are they chargeable, except with a misconception of a positive institute? And if we are not to repel the ignorant and the weak, we must either affirm that they are not ignorant in this particular, and thus accuse them, contrary to the supposition, of wilful prevarication, or we must tolerate them. Though we are far from insinuating that our pædobaptist brethren are, in general, either ignorant or weak, yet as ignorance and weakness are undoubtedly adequate to the production of any *misconception*, on the subject of religion not fundamental, they will consequently account for the error which has given birth to

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 65.

infant baptism: and just as far as it is capable of being ascribed to this source, its abettors are, by our author's concession, objects of forbearance. And since there is no medium, but all pædobaptists, however discerning in other respects, must either be supposed ignorant in this particular, or to prevaricate; forbearance must be extended to as many of them as are deemed sincere; beyond which we are as unwilling to extend it as he is. While they entertain their present views on the subject of baptism, they must either administer it to infants, or violate the dictates of conscience; and therefore, if they are *chargeable* with any thing more than a *misconception*, the matter of that charge must be deduced from their acting like upright men; an accusation which we hope, for the honour of human nature, will proceed from none but strict baptists.

The sum of what has been advanced on this head is, that the privation of communion is an evil exactly proportioned to the value of that benefit; that as far as the tendency of the exclusive system is concerned, and to the utmost power of its abettors, the evil is extended to every denomination except one; that it is either inflicted on account of *moral delinquency*, or is utterly unmerited; since, if that ground be relinquished, their exclusion must be asserted to be just, even supposing them perfectly innocent; that whatever *blame* may be imputed, bears no proportion to that which incurs the forfeiture of the same privilege in other instances, nor to the faults and imperfections which are daily tolerated without scruple; and, finally, since the practice which is treated with so much severity is the necessary result of a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute, which is only another name for ignorance or weakness in that particular, to make it the pretext of expulsion or excommunication, is repugnant to the maxims even of our opponents.

CHAP. X.

On the Contrariety of the Maxims and Sentiments of the Advocates of Strict Communion, to those which prevailed in the early Ages; in which the Innovation imputed to them by the Author is vindicated from the Charge of Misrepresentation.

In order to comprehend the true state of the question, as it respects the practice of christian antiquity, it may be convenient to distribute it into three periods; the first including the time during which correct sentiments on the subject of baptism universally prevailed; the second, that in which a gradual transition was made from the practice of adult to that of infant baptism; the third, the period in which the latter obtained a general and almost undisputed ascendency.

On the first of these periods little need be said. Where there are no dissimilar elements, there can be no mixture; and therefore to affirm that the practice we are contending for was unknown in the earliest ages of the christian church, is little more than an identical proposition. While no demur or dispute subsisted respecting either the form or the application of the baptismal rite, a punctual compliance with it was expected and enforced by the presidents of christian societies, for precisely the same reason which suggested a similar mode of proceeding to the apostles. It was a part of the will of Christ, in the interpretation of which no division of opinions subsisted among the faithful. The next period is that, during which an innovation was gradually introduced, by extending the ceremony in question to infants—a period which, from the commencement of the third unto the close of the fourth, probably comprehended the space of two centuries. Supposing the modern practice to have been first introduced towards the end of the second, or the beginning of the third century, which corresponds to the time at which it is distinctly noticed by Tertullian, the first writer who explicitly mentions it,

we cannot suppose a shorter space was requisite to procure it that complete establishment and ascendency which it possessed in the time of St. Austin. During that long interval there must have been some who still adhered to the primitive practice, and others who favoured and adopted the more recent innovations; there must, in other words, have been baptists and pædobaptists cotemporary with each other. What became of that portion of the ancient church which refused to adopt the baptism of infants? Did they separate from their brethren in order to form distinct and exclusive societies? Of this, not the faintest trace or vestige is to be found in ecclesiastical history; and the supposition is completely confuted by the concurrent testimony of ancient writers to the universal incorporation of orthodox christians into one grand community. We challenge our opponents to produce the shadow of evidence in favour of the existence, during that long tract of time, of a single society of which adult baptism was the distinguishing characteristic. Tertullian, it is acknowledged, is the first who distinctly and unequivocally adverts to the contrary practice: and as he expresses disapprobation of it at the same time, without the remotest intimation of the propriety of making it the ground of separation, he must be allowed to form one instance of the practice of mixed communion; and unless we are disposed to assert that the modern innovation in the rite of baptism supplanted the original ordinance at once, multitudes must have been in precisely the same situation. We well know that in the latter period of his life, he *did* secede from the orthodox catholic church; but we are equally certain that he was moved to this measure, not by his disapprobation of infant baptism, but solely by his attachment to the Montanists.

We, therefore, offer our opponents the alternative, either of affirming that the transition from the primitive to the modern usage, was sudden and instantaneous, in opposition to all that observation suggests respecting the operations of mind, or of acknowledging that, for two centuries, the predecessors of the present baptists unanimously approved and practised a mixed communion—a communion in which baptists and pædobaptists united in the same societies.

Thus it appears that the system we are advocating, instead of being, as Booth and Kinghorn assert, a "modern invention," was introduced as early as it was possible —as early as the dissimilar materials existed of which the combination under discussion is formed. It is evident, that no sooner did a difference of opinion on the subject of baptism arise, than the system of forbearance recommended itself at once to all who adhered to the sentiments of the modern baptists, throughout every part of the world; and that it is the opposite principle which has to contend with all the odium and suspicion attached to recent innovations.

When we descend to the third period, we are presented with a new scene. After the commencement of the fourth century, down to the æra of the Reformation, the baptism of infants was firmly established, and prevailed to such an extent, that few traces of the ordinance, in its primitive state, are to be discerned. Many of the Waldenses, however, are judged, with great appearance of evidence, to have held opinions on that subject coincident with those by which we, as a denomination, are distinguished. By their persecutors of the Romish community they are usually stigmatized and reproached for holding the anabaptist heresy; while it appears, on the contrary, that there were not wanting some amongst them who practised the baptism of infants.* These opposite statements, exhibited with equal confidence, on this obscure branch of ecclesiastical history, are best reconciled and accounted for, by supposing them divided in their sentiments on that particular. No indication, however, is discoverable of a rupture in external communion having occurred on

* See *The History of the Baptists,* by Mr. Ivimey, in which this subject is discussed with much care and impartiality. To those who wish for information respecting many curious and important circumstances connected with the progress of the baptist opinions, I would earnestly recommend the perusal of that valuable work, for which the public at large, and our own denomination in particular, are much indebted to the pious and laborious author.

that account; and, from the acknowledged difficulty of ascertaining the separate existence of baptist societies during the middle ages, and until the period of the Reformation, the necessary inference is, either that there were none, during that interval, who adhered to the primitive institute, or, as is far more probable, that they were mingled and incorporated with persons of another persuasion.

Hence it is manifest that the concurrent testimonies of the fathers of the three or four first centuries, in proof of the necessity of baptism to church fellowship, are urged to no purpose whatever, unless it could be shown that there was no mixed communion, no association of the advocates of adult, with the patrons of pædobaptism, known in those ages; a supposition which is at direct variance with facts. Nor is it at all difficult to assign a satisfactory reason for that combination of testimonies which the writings of the fathers supply in favour of the essential connexion of the two ordinances. The scanty writings which remain of the authors of the second century, afford no decisive indication of the existence of infant baptism in the period in which they flourished; and, during the third, the few authors whose works have descended to us, appear, with the exception of Tertullian, to have imbibed the pædobaptist persuasion. It was natural for the first class of these fathers, who lived at a time when no doubt or dispute had arisen on the subject, to insist on a compliance with that ordinance; nor was it possible for the second, who extended baptism to infants, and considered it as the indispensable means of regeneration, to pursue another course.

That there was a mixture of persons, of different persuasions, in christian societies, during the period to which we have adverted, appears to be an unquestionable fact; but in what manner those who adhered to the primitive institution reasoned on the subject, as they have left no writings behind them, or none which touch on this subject, must be left to conjecture. Whether they defended their conduct on precisely the same principles with ourselves, or whether they considered pædo

baptism as not so properly nullifying, as corrupting or enfeebling, a christian ordinance, it is to little purpose to inquire. It is sufficient for us to know, that the practice which is stigmatized as *modern*, existed as early as a difference of opinion on the subject arose.

In my former treatise I had remarked, "that the decision of christian writers, that baptism, in some form or other, must necessarily precede the celebration of the eucharist, supposing it ever so unanimous, affords but a feeble proof, since it assumes for its basis the impossibility of the universal prevalence of error." The truth of this assertion is almost self-evident; for if it be possible for error to prevail universally, what should prevent the possibility of its doing so in this particular instance? "No," says our author, "it assumes a very different principle; that the human mind in all its wanderings never took this direction before."* But what is the difference betwixt affirming, that the opinion which separates the title to communion, from baptism, was unknown until it was adopted by the advocates of mixed communion, and asserting "that the human mind never took this direction before?" Are they any thing more than two different modes of expressing the same proposition? To say, then, that the argument in question assumes for its basis "that the human mind never took this direction before," is to say, that it assumes to itself a method of reasoning most repugnant to the rules of logic, however familiar with this writer.

He feels very indignant at my affirming that the right of excluding persons of unquestionable worth and piety was never claimed by antiquity. In opposition to this, he adduces the example of Cyprian, who insisted on the rebaptization of heretics and schismatics, previous to their reception into the body of the faithful. If it be considered, however, in what light heretics and schismatics were contemplated by that celebrated father, the objection vanishes; since no doubt can be entertained, that their preceding profession of christianity was consi

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 145.

dered by him as a mere nullity, their faith fundamentally erroneous, the privileges they supposed themselves to possess, a vain illusion, and the entire system of their religion, an abomination in the sight of God. We find him every where exerting his utmost powers of language, which were by no means inconsiderable, in stigmatizing their character and degrading their pretensions. Having little taste for quotation, the following passages may suffice to convince the reader under what opprobrious colours he was accustomed to represent that description of professors. It is proper just to premise, that, on their manifesting a disposition to return to the catholic church, while Cyprian contended for the necessity of their being rebaptized before they were admitted, his opponent Stephen insisted on the sufficiency of recantation, accompanied with the imposition of hands,* without reiterating a rite, which he concluded could not be repeated without profanation. The latter opinion, in spite of the high authority of the African father, being confirmed by the council of Nice, became the received doctrine of the church, and the opposite tenet was finally denounced as heresy. But to return to Cyprian:—"We," said he, "affirm," referring to the Novatians, who were esteemed schismatics, "that those who come to us are not rebaptized, but baptized. For neither do they receive any thing, where there is nothing; but they come to us, that they may receive here, where all grace and truth is."† After stigmatizing the baptism of schismatics, as "a filthy and profane dipping," he complains, that certain of his colleagues "did not consider that it was written, he who is baptized by the dead, what profit does he derive from his washing? But it is manifest, that they who are not in the church are numbered amongst the dead, and cannot possibly be quickened by him who is not alive; since there is one only church, which having obtained the grace of eternal life, both lives for ever, and quickens the people of God."‡

* Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 210. Oxonii, anno 1682.
† Ibid. p. 194. ‡ Id ibid.

Speaking of heretics, he makes a distinction betwixt such as, having been members of the catholic church, fell into heresy for a time, but were afterwards recovered, and such as sprang originally from them. With respect to the latter, he says, "If he who comes from the heretics has not been before baptized in the church, but comes entirely alien and profane, he is to be baptized, that he may become a sheep, because the only holy water which can make sheep is in the church." In another epistle, we find him reasoning in the following manner:—"The very interrogation," he says, "which takes place in baptism, bears witness to the truth. Dost thou believe in eternal life, and the remission of sins by the holy church? We mean by it, that the remission of sins is given only in the church; but, amongst heretics, where the church is not, sins cannot be remitted. Let them therefore who plead for heretics, (that is, for their admission into the church without rebaptizing,) either alter the interrogation, or vindicate the truth; unless they are disposed to give the appellation of the church to those whom they assert to possess true baptism."*

His epistles are full of similar sentiments. What resemblance, let me ask, are they perceived to bear to the principles on which strict communion is founded; or who will be so absurd as to affirm that the example of Cyprian, in rejecting the communion of persons whom he esteemed spiritually dead, and incapacitated for receiving the remission of sins, affords the least countenance for treating in a similar manner, such as are acknowledged to possess the most eminent and exalted piety? "True," Mr. Kinghorn replies, "but when they requested admission into the catholic orthodox church, they had ceased to be heretics or schismatics, since they left the societies where heresy was professed, acknowledged their former error, and requested to be numbered with the orthodox. Notwithstanding this, however, Cyprian insisted on their being re-baptized."† But why

* Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 194.
† Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 152.

did he insist upon it? He tells us himself, it was because "they had received nothing, they were baptized by the dead;" they wanted "that holy water peculiar to the church, which alone can vivify;" and their pretended baptism, or, to use his own words, "their profane dipping" was necessarily unaccompanied with the remission of sins. In short, however well they might be disposed, and prepared, on the application of due means, for the reception of the highest benefits, they were, as yet, in his estimation, in a state of unregeneracy. Hence the reader may judge of the pertinence and correctness of the subsequent remark:—"Their interest in the blessings of the christian covenant," says Mr. Kinghorn, "was not doubted, yet their right to the Lord's supper was doubted, because the validity of their baptism was questioned."* "*Their interest in the blessings of the covenant was not doubted*," although Cyprian declares his conviction, that they had received nothing, that their baptism was a nullity, that they wanted the only water which could quicken, and that, instead of it, they had received only a "sordid and profane dipping, which could not possibly be accompanied with the remission of sins."

The reader will be at no loss to determine which of us is justly chargeable with "taking the present state of opinion, and of applying it to former ages;" when he perceives that my opponent is so possessed with these ideas, as to be utterly incapable of contemplating the sentiments of Cyprian through the right medium. He entirely forgets the importance he attached to baptism as a regenerating ordinance; and his denial, that the persons of whom he was treating had received it; which, combined together, must necessarily have placed them, in his estimation, at the utmost remove from the situation in which pious pædobaptists are at present considered.

His opponent, Stephen, contended for the propriety of receiving them without a repetition of that rite, because he already conceived it had been truly and solidly performed: this Cyprian denied, and the only question in

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 154.

debate respected the validity of a ceremony which both equally esteemed to be the necessary means of regeneration. Upon the principles common to both, the African father reasoned with most consistency: for how could heretics and schismatics, who were acknowledged to be spiritually dead, communicate life by the performance of a ceremony? and how totally incongruous to suppose every part of their religious service devoid of vitality and force, except their baptism, by which, as Cyprian continually urges, they were supposed to confer that renovating spirit which, in every other instance, they were denied to possess.

But, whatever judgment may be formed of the merits of this controversy, nothing can be more impertinent to the question at issue betwixt my opponent and myself, which is simply, whether the refusal to admit persons of unquestioned piety into the church, was the doctrine of the ancient fathers. In proof of this, he alleges the example of Cyprian, who contended for the necessity of rebaptizing such as had been already reclaimed from heresy and schism. Now, if Cyprian's ideas on the subject of baptism had been the same, or in any degree similar to those which are at present entertained the objection would have been forcible; but when we learn from his own mouth, that his demand was founded on their not having been "quickened" on their wanting "the water of life," on their not having approached the fountain of renovation and pardon, in a word, on their still remaining unregenerate; what can be conceived more futile, than to adduce his authority for refusing a class of persons to whom it is acknowledged none of these objections apply? Let us first insist on the admission of those whom we believe to be destitute of regeneration and pardon, and we must dispose of the authority of Cyprian as we can; but, till that is the case however we differ from him in its application, we act on one and the same principle.

Mr. Kinghorn is very anxious to prevent his readers from being led to suppose, from certain passages I had quoted, that Cyprian was a friend to mixed communion.

If he means by this that he was not disposed to admit into the church such as were, on all hands, acknowledged to be unbaptized, his opinion is, undoubtedly, correct; nothing was more remote from my intention than to insinuate the contrary. But if it is his intention to affirm that Cyprian was averse to the mixture of baptists and pædobaptists at the Lord's table, he must be supposed to assert that there were none in his communion who adhered to what we conceive the primitive institute; and, considering the extensive influence which he derived from his station as metropolitan of Africa, and the celebrity of his character, this is equivalent to an admission that it had totally disappeared from that province as early as the middle of the third century; a dangerous concession, as well as a most improbable supposition. It is to suppose that a corruption (as we must necessarily deem it) of a christian ordinance, the explicit mention of which first occurs but fifty years before, had already spread with such rapidity through Africa, as to efface every trace and relic of the primitive practice. It is unnecessary to observe the important advantage which such a concession would yield in the controversy with pædobaptists. The truth is, that unless we are disposed to admit that the baptism of infants had already totally supplanted the original ordinance throughout the Catholic church, Cyprian must be allowed to have patronised mixed communion in precisely the same sense in which it is countenanced at present by our pædobaptist brethren.

This may suffice to rescue me from the charge of misrepresenting the sentiments of Cyprian; an accusation which excited so much surprise, that I determined to reperuse the epistles of that celebrated writer; but after carefully reading every line, I must solemnly declare that I feel at a loss to discover a shadow of ground for this imputation.

It is not, however, the sentiments of Cyprian only that I am charged with misrepresenting; the donatists it is affirmed, proceeded on the same views, when they insisted on the necessity of rebaptizing the members of the

catholic church. "They acted," he says, "exactly on the same principle which Mr. Hall reprobates." That principle, it is unnecessary to repeat, is the propriety, not of baptizing such as have been induced, through misconception, to neglect the valid performance of that rite, which is our uniform practice, but the exclusion of those, against whom nothing is alleged, besides the invalidity of their baptism. But nothing can be more remote from the ground on which the donatists proceeded. They conceived the whole christian world contaminated by their communion with the African traditors;* that they had fallen into a state of deep and deadly corruption, and, so far were they from founding the separation on the insufficiency of their baptism, that they inferred its invalidity solely from the moral contagion they were deemed to have contracted, and from the abominations they were supposed to tolerate.† They considered the church of Christ, as far as the catholic societies were concerned, as extinct; and, on that account, were vehemently urged by St. Austin to reconcile their hypothesis with the promise made to Abraham, "that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed." But will any pædobaptist be found so absurd as to press the advocates of strict communion with a similar argument? And will it, after this, be contended, that the conduct of the donatists, in refusing to admit the baptism of men whom they viewed as plunged in a state of hopeless degeneracy, bears any resemblance to the conduct of those who repel such as they affect to regard as the most excellent of the earth?

This writer is highly offended with my presuming to express a conviction that the advocates of strict communion have violated more maxims of antiquity than any other sect upon record. The extent to which they have

* Those who delivered up the sacred writings.

† "Dicit enim Parmenianus, hinc probari consceleratum fuisse orbem terrarum criminibus traditionis, et aliorum sacrilegiorum: quia cum multa alia fuerint tempore persecutionis admissa, nulla propterea facta est in ipsis provinciis separatio populorum."—*Contra Epistolam Parmeniani, Augustini,* lib. i.

carried their deviation in one particular is already sufficiently obvious. Mr. Kinghorn was challenged to produce an instance of an ancient father, who contended for the right of repelling a genuine christian from the eucharist. He adduced the example of Cyprian, and of the donatists; and by this time we presume the intelligent reader is at no loss to perceive how completely these instances have failed.

A writer of his undisputed learning would, doubtless, select the strongest case; we may, therefore, until he fortifies his positions better, venture, without hesitation, to enumerate, among other deviations, the pretended right of excluding such as are acknowledged to be genuine christians. In ancient times, the limits of communion were supposed to be coextensive with those of visible christianity, and none were excluded from the catholic church but those whom that church deemed heretics or schismatics. Our opponents proceed on an opposite principle; they exclude myriads whom they would not dare to stigmatize with either appellation. In ancient times, the necessity of baptism, as a qualification for communion, was avowedly and uniformly founded on its supposed essential connexion with salvation; our opponents have totally relinquished that ground, yet still assert with equal vehemence, the same necessity, and absurdly urge the shadow, or rather the skeleton, of ancient precedent, after they had disembowelled it, and divested it of its very soul and spirit. In ancient times, the whole mass of human population was distributed into two classes, the church and the world; all who were deemed incapable of admission to the first, were considered as belonging to the last of these.

The advocates of strict communion have invented a new classification, a division of mankind into the world, the church, by which they mean themselves, and an immense body of pious pædobaptists, who are comprised in neither of the preceding classes, their charity forbidding them to place them with the former, and their peculiar principles with the latter. Were they to assign them to the world, they would at once declare them out

of the pale of salvation; were they to acknowledge them a part of the church, they would convict thamselves ot the crime of schism, in repelling them from communion. In attempting to designate this class of christians, compared to which *their* numbers dwindle into impalpable insignificance, they are reduced to the utmost perplexity. On the one hand, they contend, that they are not entitled to be considered as disciples; on the other, they loudly proclaim the confidence they entertain of their ready admission into heaven. They are acknowledged to possess faith in an eminent degree, yet it is denied that they have afforded any legitimate evidence of it; and though *out of the church*, it is confessed, it would be the height of bigotry to pretend to invalidate their religious pretensions, yet to recognise their validity *in it*, would be an equal impropriety. It is unnecessary to say how far these maxims deviate from christian antiquity; nor is it easy to conceive the astonishment their avowal would have excited in the breast of the Cyprians and the Austins; I might add, of the apostles and evangelists of a former age. Guided by the simple dictates of inspiration, accustomed to contemplate the world under two divisions only, that of believers and of unbelievers, they would, doubtless, have felt themselves at an utter loss to comprehend the possibility of the existence of an equivocal race, who are to be treated as heathens *in* the church, and as christians *out* of it; and, while they possess whatever is necessary for an instant translation to glory, are disqualified for the possession of the most ordinary privileges of the christian church.

As it is the province of poetry to give to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name," if we cannot eulogize the reasoning of our opponents, we willingly allow them all the praise of a creative fancy, due to the invention of so bold a fiction.

The unity of the church is not merely a tenet of antiquity, but a doctrine of scripture, to which great importance is attached by the inspired writers. Wherever the word occurs, without being applied to a par-

ticular society, the idea of *unity* is strictly preserved by the invariable use of the singular number; the great community denoted by it is styled the *body of Christ*, of which every believer is declared to be a particular member;* and the perfect *oneness* of the whole is solemnly and repeatedly attested. "The bread which we break," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we, being many, are *one* bread and *one* body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."† "Now ye," says he, in the same epistle, "are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

This grand and elevating conception of the unity which characterises the christian church, was ever present to the minds of the fathers; and never do they rise to a higher strain of manly and impressive eloquence, than when they are expatiating on this theme. Thus we find Irenæus celebrating that "church which was disseminated throughout the whole world, to the very ends of the earth, which carefully preserved the preaching and the faith she had once received, as though she resided in one house; and proclaimed, and taught, and delivered the same doctrine, as though she possessed but one soul, one heart, and one mouth."‡ "Every kind," says Tertullian, "must be referred to its origin. So many and so great churches as now subsist, are that one church, founded by the apostles, from which they all derive. Thus all are first, and apostolical, while they retain the relation of peace, the appellation of fraternity, and the symbol of hospitality; which rights are regulated by no other principle than the tradition of the same creed."‖ Cyprian, comparing the church to the sun, affirms, that while she extends her rays through the whole world, it is yet one light, which is every where diffused; nor is the unity of the body separated; her exuberant fertility stretches her branches to the whole earth; she expands her streams most widely, yet the head and origin is

* Eph. v. 23. Col. i. 24. † 1 Cor x. 16, 17.

‡ Irenæus. lib. i. c. 2, 3.

‖ Tertullian De Prescriptione Hereticorum, p 209.—Lutetiæ Parisiorum, 1675.

one, and it is one mother that is so prolific. "Who," says he, "is so wicked and perfidious, who so maddened by the fury of discord, as to suppose it possible to divide, or attempt to divide, the unity of God, the vestment of Christ, the church of God?" He elsewhere expresses his conviction that he who does not hold the unity of the church, does not hold the faith.*

During the first centuries, the unity of the church was not a splendid visionary theory; it was practically exemplified in the habits of reciprocal communion, cultivated and maintained among orthodox societies through every part of the globe.†

So repugnant, however, is the narrow exclusive system which we are opposing, to that considered as characteristic of the church, that its advocates profess themselves at a loss to comprehend its meaning, except in the arrogant and offensive sense in which it is sometimes employed to vindicate the pretensions of Roman catholics and high churchmen. "Is the unity of the church," Mr. Kinghorn asks, "destroyed by nothing but strict communion?"‡ And, suppose it be, what then? Will it follow that strict communion does *not* destroy it? Whether it has this effect or not, is the only inquiry; not whether something else may produce the same effect in an equal degree. He adds, "is there any sense in which the church of God is, or can be considered as one, in this imperfect state, except in that which will include all those good men, who, from conscientious differences, cannot unite together on earth?" For the conduct of those good men who refuse to unite with us, unless we consent to the performance of rites which, in our estimation, are unscriptural and superstitious, they alone are respon-

* De Unit. Ecc. pp. 110, 111.

† See upon this branch of the subject, the admirable work of Dr. Mason, who, by a copious induction of ancient authorities, has indisputably established the fact, that every portion of the orthodox church formed one communion; and most ably illustrated the mode of proceeding by which their union was maintained. The depth and accuracy with which he has discussed the subject must be my apology for not entering into it more fully.

‡ Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 101.

sible; but, where nothing of this nature is proposed, as is the case in the present instance, to deem them *personally* disqualified for communion, and on that ground to refuse it, is totally repugnant to every conception of unity.

In the above passage, the author breaks his mysterious silence, and, for the first time, acknowledges that all good men are component parts of the church of God, and are, consequently, members of Christ's mystical body. But he who concedes this, unless he suppose the Scriptures repealed, must confess his obligation to regulate his treatment of those members by the rules and maxims the New Testament enjoins, which prohibit the least degree of alienation, and assert the equal claim to regard which each individual, as a part of the body, possesses; insomuch that no language, except that which the Holy Ghost has employed, is sufficient adequately to represent that oneness of spirit, that perfect co-operation, that conjunction, or identity rather, of interests and affections, which ought to penetrate and pervade the whole. All other unions of a moral nature are, in reality, lax, feeble, and evanescent, compared with that which joins the members of Christ to each other, and to their Head. But will it be asserted that the practice of strict communion corresponds with these ideas? or that the treatment of the persons whom it excludes is a practical exemplification of the conduct which the christians at Corinth were commanded reciprocally to maintain? It will not be pretended; and since these passages, which imperatively enjoin such a behaviour on the members of Christ, and expressly and repeatedly assure us that his body is the church, are still in force, the above concession must either be retracted, or a practice so directly subversive of it be relinquished. If a society, of whatever description it may be, has by mutual consent selected a ceremony as the symbol of its union, those individuals, who, for the express purpose of marking their separation, refuse to perform the ceremony, have most unequivocally renounced that society; and, by parity of reason, since the joint celebration of the Lord's supper is established

in the church as the discriminating token by which its members are to recognise each other, to refuse to join in it, is equivalent to an express declaration, that the persons from whom we withdraw as *personally* disqualified, are not considered as parts of the church. It is acknowledged, however, in the foregoing passage, that all good men belong to it. But if so, they are also members of the body of Christ, and consequently entitled to exactly the same treatment as was enjoined on the Corinthians towards each other. But supposing, in consequence of minor differences of opinion, the latter had proceeded to an open rupture of communion, and refused to unite in the celebration of the eucharist; will it be asserted, that the pathetic and solemn injunctions of their inspired teacher would not have been violated by such a measure? The answer to this question is obvious, and its application to the point under discussion irresistible. The advocates of the exclusive system, on whatever side they turn, are surrounded and pressed with difficulties, from which it is utterly impossible for them to escape. To affirm that pædobaptism is of so malignant a tendency as to sever its patrons from the mystical body of Christ, is at once to impugn the hopes of salvation; since the supposition of a vital efficacy, imparted from Christ as the Head, which fails to constitute the subject of it a member, is equally unintelligible and unscriptural. The language adopted on this subject is confessedly figurative, but not on that account obscure. Its foundation is evidently laid in that derivation of spiritual life to the souls of the faithful, for which they are indebted to their union with the Saviour; for which reason, it would be the height of absurdity to refuse the application of the figure on an occasion which comprehends its whole import and meaning. We may therefore with confidence affirm, that all genuine believers are alike members of Christ's body. But if this be admitted, they are as much entitled to the benefit, not merely of admission into the church, but of all those benevolent sympathies and attentions prescribed in the preceding passages, as though they had been mentioned by name; since the

only ground on which they are enforced, is the relation the objects of them are supposed to sustain to that body.

Thus we perceive, in the principles and practice of our opponents, another glaring instance of gross violation, as well of the dictates of inspiration, as of the maxims of christian antiquity; both which concur in inculcating the doctrine of the absolute unity of the church, of its constituting Christ's mystical body, and of the horrible incongruity, I might almost say impiety, of attempting to establish a system, which represents a great majority of its members as *personally* disqualified for communion.

Once more: what foundation will they find, in ancient precedents, for the peculiar distinction allotted to one particular ceremony above every other, in consequence of which they allow the cultivation of the most intimate religious intercourse, of the most perfect intercommunity, in every branch of worship, with members of other denominations, providing they do not so far forget themselves as to lose sight of their disputes at the Lord's table? The Holy Ghost informs us, that the end of Christ's death was "to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad." It seems strange, that one of the principal purposes of its celebration should be to scatter abroad those children of God, who are gathered together every where else. Be this as it may, we challenge these zealous champions of precedent to produce the faintest vestige of such a practice in the ages of antiquity; or to direct us to a single nation, or sect, or individual, for an example of that capricious and arbitrary distinction attached to the eucharist, by which it is refused to an immense multitude, who are considered as entitled to every other mark of christian fraternity.

These observations, we trust, will be amply sufficient to justify the assertion, that our opponents have violated, with respect to ecclesiastical economy, more maxims of antiquity than any other sect upon record; nor will the intelligent reader be at a loss to perceive, that the weight of this censure is little, if at all, diminished, by their conformity in one particular, by their insisting upon baptism as a term of communion; when it is recollected that the principles on which they found it, have no relation whatever to those on which it was maintained by the ancient fathers.

For the length to which this part of the discussion is extended, a natural and laudable anxiety to repel the charge of misrepresentation, will probably be deemed a sufficient apology.

CHAP. XI.

Conclusion.

BEFORE I put a final period to my part in this controversy, the attention of the reader is requested to a few miscellaneous remarks, which naturally arise out of the contemplation of the whole subject.

It is just matter of surprise, that the topic in debate should be regarded by any serious and intelligent christian, as of small importance. Such a conclusion can only be ascribed to extreme inattention, or to the force of an inveterate, though perhaps latent, prejudice, producing an unmerited predilection in favour of certain systems of ecclesiastical polity, which are incapable of sustaining the ordeal of inquiry. That those should shrink from the investigation of such topics, who, by receiving their religion from the hands of their superiors, in a mass, have already relinquished the liberty of thinking for themselves, is no more than might well be expected. But to minds free and unfettered, accustomed to spurn at the shackles of authority; and, above all, to protestant dissenters, whose peculiar boast is the privilege of following, in the organization of their churches, no other guide but the Scriptures, that such subjects should appear of little moment, is truly astonishing. The inquiry first in importance undoubtedly is, What is christianity? What, supposing the truth of scripture, is to be believed, and to be done, with a view to eternal life? Happily

for the christian world, there probably never was a time, when, in the solution of this question, so much unanimity was witnessed among the professors of serious piety, as at present. Systems of religion, fundamentally erroneous, are falling fast into decay; while the subordinate points of difference, which do not affect the primary verities of christianity, nor the ground of hope, are either consigned to oblivion, or are the subjects of temperate and amicable controversy; and in consequence of their subsiding to their proper level, the former appear in their just and natural magnitude.

Hence, in the present state of the church, externally considered, the evil most to be deplored is, the unnatural distance at which christians stand from each other; the spirit of sects, the disposition to found their union on the "wood, hay, and stubble" of human inventions, or of disputable tenets, instead of building on the eternal rock, the "faith once delivered to the saints." They all profess to look forward to a period when these divisions will cease, and there will be "one fold under one Shepherd." But, while every denomination flatters itself with the persuasion of that fold being its own, the principal use to which the annunciations of prophecy are directed, is to supply a motive for redoubled exertions in the defence and extension of their respective peculiarities; and instead of hailing the dawn of a brighter day, as an event in which all are equally interested, it is too often considered, there is reason to fear, as destined to complete the triumph of a party.

If we consult the scriptures, we shall be at no loss to perceive, that the unity of the church is not merely a doctrine most clearly revealed, but that its practical exemplification is one of the principal designs of the christian dispensation. We are expressly told, that our Saviour purposed by his death to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad;" and for the accomplishment of this design, he interceded, during his last moments, in language which instructs us to consider it as the grand means of the conversion of the world. His prophetic anticipations were not disappointed; for while a visible unanimity prevailed amongst his followers, his cause every where triumphed: the concentrated zeal, the ardent cooperation of a comparative few, impelled by one spirit, and directed to one object, were more than a match for hostile myriads. No sooner was the bond of unity broken, by the prevalence of intestine quarrels and dissensions, than the interests of truth languished; until mahometanism in the east, and popery in the west, completed the work of deterioration, which the loss of primitive simplicity and love, combined with the spirit of intolerance, first commenced.

If the religion of Christ ever resumes her ancient lustre, and we are assured by the highest authority she will, it must be by retracing our steps, by reverting to the original principles on which, considered as a social institution, the church was founded. We must go back to the simplicity of the first ages—we must learn to quit a subtle and disputatious theology, for a religion of love, emanating from a few divinely energetic principles, which pervade almost every page of inspiration, and demand nothing for their cordial reception and belief, besides a humble and contrite heart. Reserving to ourselves the utmost freedom of thought, in the interpretation of the sacred oracles, and pushing our inquiries, as far as our opportunities admit, into every department of revealed truth, we shall not dream of obtruding precarious conclusions on others, as articles of faith; but shall receive with open arms all who appear to "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and find a sufficient bond of union—a sufficient scope for all our sympathies, in the doctrine of the cross. If the Saviour appears to be loved, obeyed, and adored,—if his blood is sprinkled on the conscience, and his spirit resides in the heart, why should we be dissatisfied? *we*, who profess to be actuated by no other motive, to live to no other purpose, than the promotion of his interest.

If the kingdom of Christ, like the kingdoms of this world, admitted of local and discordant interests, and the possession of exclusive privileges—if it were a system of compromise between the selfish passions of individuals,

and the promotion of the general good, the policy of conferring on one class of its subjects certain advantages and immunities withheld from another, might be easily comprehended. But in this, as well as many other features, it essentially differs. Founded on the basis of a divine equality, its privileges are as free as air; and there is not a single blessing which it proposes to bestow, but is held by the same tenure, and is capable of being possessed to the same extent, by every believer. The freedom which it confers is of so high a character, and the dignity to which it elevates its subjects, as the sons of God, so transcendent, that whether they are "Barbarians or Scythians, bond or free, male or female, they are from henceforth one in Christ Jesus." In asserting the equal right which the Gentiles possessed, in common with the Jews, to all the privileges attached to the christian profession, Peter founds his argument on this very principle. "And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as unto us, and *put no difference between us and them*, purifying their hearts by faith." In his apprehension, it was God, the Searcher of hearts, who, by the collation of his Spirit, in his marvellous and sanctifying gifts, having made no distinction betwixt the Gentiles and themselves, decided the controversy. If that great apostle reasoned correctly on the subject, we have only to change the term Gentiles for pædobaptists, or for any other denomination of sincere christians, and the inference remains in its full force.

Among the other attempts to deter us from pursuing a system established by such high authority, it is extraordinary that we should be reminded of the fearful responsibility we incur. To this topic Mr. Kinghorn has devoted a whole chapter. When it is recollected that we plead for the reception of none whom Christ has not received, of none whose hearts are not purified by faith, and who are not possessed of the same spirit, the communication of which was considered by St. Peter as a decisive proof that *no difference was put between them and others* by God himself, it is easy to determine where the

danger lies. Were we to suffer ourselves to lose sight of these principles, and by discountenancing and repelling those whom he accepts, to dispute the validity of his seal, and subject to our miserable scrutiny, pretensions which have passed the ordeal, and received the sanction, of him, "who understandeth the heart," we should have just reason to tremble for the consequences; and, with all our esteem for the piety of many of our opponents, we conceive it no injury or insult, to put up the prayer of our Lord for them—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He who alters the terms of communion, changes the fundamental laws of Christ's kingdom. He assumes a legislative power, and ought, in order to justify that conduct, to exhibit his credentials, with a force and splendour of evidence, equal at least to those which attested the divine legation of Moses and the prophets.

It has been frequently observed on this occasion, that every voluntary society possesses the power of determining on the qualifications of its members; and that, for the same reason, every church is authorized to enact such terms of admission as it shall see fit. This conclusion, however, is illogical and unfounded. There is little or no analogy betwixt the two cases. Human societies originate solely in the private views and inclinations of those who compose them; and as they are not founded on divine institution, so neither are they restricted with respect to the objects they are destined to pursue. The church is a society instituted by Heaven; it is the visible seat of that "kingdom which God has set up;" the laws by which it is governed are of his prescribing, and the purposes which it is designed to accomplish, are limited and ascertained by infinite wisdom. When, therefore, from its analogy to other societies, it is inferred that it has an equal right to organise itself at its pleasure, nothing can be more fallacious; unless it be meant merely to assert its exemption from the operation of physical force, which is a view of the subject with which we are not at present concerned. In every step of its proceedings, it is amenable to a higher than human tribunal;

and on account of its freedom from external control, its obligation, *in foro conscientiæ*, exactly to conform to the mandates of revelation, is the more sacred and the more indispensable; being loosened from every earthly tie, on purpose that it may be at liberty to "follow the Lord whithersoever he goeth."

That these maxims, plain and obvious as they must appear, have been too often totally lost sight of, he who has the slightest acquaintance with ecclesiastical history must be aware; and to their complete abandonment we are indebted for the introduction of strict communion.

"The baptists," Mr. Kinghorn informs us, "consider themselves as holding to notice *one* neglected truth."* Whether they have adopted the mode of proceeding most likely to accomplish their object, may be justly doubted. Independently, however, of any such consideration, it is the *principle*, thus distinctly avowed, to which we object—the *principle* of organizing a church with a specific view to the propagation of some particular truth; which is a perversion of the original end and design of christian societies. Nothing, it is certain, was more remote from the views of their first founders, who aimed at nothing less than to render them the general depositaries of the "faith once delivered to the saints;" and for this purpose carefully inculcated the whole "truth as it is in Jesus," along with the duty of preserving it incorrupt and entire; without the most distant intimation that it was their province to watch over one department with more vigilance than another: least of all was it their design to recommend, as the object of preference, an external ceremony, the nature of which was destined to become a subject of debate among christians.

Let each denomination pursue this plan—let each fix upon the promotion of some one truth as the specific object of its exertions, and the effect will soon appear, not only in extending the spirit of disunion, but in the injury which the interests of truth itself will sustain.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 69.

Every denomination will exhibit some portion of it, in a distorted and mutilated form; none will be in possession of the whole, and the result will be something like the confusion of Babel, where every man spoke in a separate dialect. As the beauty of truth consists chiefly in the harmony and proportion of its several parts, it is as impossible to display it to advantage in fragments, as to give a just idea of a noble and majestic structure by exhibiting a single brick.

What is the consequence which must be expected from teaching an illiterate assembly that the principal design of their union is to extend the practice of a particular ceremony, but to invest it with an undue importance in their eyes, and by tempting them to look upon themselves as christians of a higher order, to foster an overweening self-conceit, to generate selfish passions, and encourage ambitious projects? Accustomed to give themselves a decided preference above others, to treat with practical contempt the religious pretensions of the best and wisest of men, and to live in an element of separation and exclusion, it would be astonishing indeed if their humility were not impaired, and the more delicate sympathies of christian affection almost extinguished. In the situation in which they have placed themselves, they are reduced to a necessity of performing continually those operations which other denominations reserve for the last extremity; they are familiarized to the infliction of the most formidable sentence that the church is empowered to pass, and to that excision of the members of Christ from the body, to which others proceed with fear and trembling.

It is freely admitted, that there are seasons when it is the duty of a christian society to bend its particular attention to the exhibition and defence of a neglected branch of truth, in order to supply an antidote to the errors by which it may be attempted to be corrupted. There is no fundamental doctrine which we may not be called upon, in an especial manner, to maintain and fortify in its turn. But to make this the specific object of the constitution of a church is totally different; it is to

contract its views and limit its efforts in a manner utterly inconsistent with the design of its institution, which is to exhibit both the theory and practice of christianity, in all its plenitude and extent.

An exception, however, must be made, where the truth which is said to be neglected is fundamental. The assertion and vindication of such a truth is equivalent to the maintenance of christianity itself, which, in common with every other system, is incapable of surviving the destruction of its vital parts. Hence the reformers were justified in laying the doctrine of justification by faith as the basis of the reformed religion, because the formal denial of that truth is incompatible with the existence of a church. But, where religious communities have been founded on refined speculations, or on some particular mode of explaining and interpreting disputable tenets, the most mischievous consequences have resulted. The people usually denominated Quakers set out with the professed design of exhibiting the doctrine of the Spirit, which they chose to consider as a *neglected* truth, and the consequence has been such a distortion of that momentous doctrine as has probably contributed not a little to subject it to contempt. The Sandemanians profess to constitute their societies with an express view to the revival of certain *neglected* truths, and the effect, as far as their efforts have succeeded, has been the extinction of vital piety. The high calvinists, or to speak more properly, the antinomians, are loud and clamorous in professing their solicitude to revive a certain class of *neglected* truths, and the result of their labour has been to corrupt the few truths they possess, and to consign others of equal importance to contempt and oblivion. In each of these instances, by detaching particular portions from the system to which it belongs, the continuity of truth has been broken, and the vital communication between its respective parts, on which its life and vigour depend, interrupted.

It was reserved for our opponents to pursue the same system under a new form, by selecting the ceremony of baptism as their distinguishing symbol, and to degrade the christian profession, in our apprehension, by placing it in the due administration of the element of water.

Where, it is natural to ask (though it is an inferior consideration), where is the *policy* of such a proceeding? What tendency has it to recommend and to propagate the rite, about which such zeal is exerted and such solicitude expressed? Will the insisting on it as a term of communion give it any additional evidence, or invest it with supernumerary charms? Will it be better relished and received for its approaching in the form of an exaction, than if it was entrusted to the force of argument and persuasion? Were it permitted to have recourse to intimidation in the concerns of religion, where are our means and resources? where shall we look for that splendour of reputation, that command of emolument and power, which shall render a state of separation from baptist societies an intolerable grievance? Let us learn to think soberly of ourselves, and not endeavour to enforce the justest principles by means foreign to their nature, nor, by substituting an impotent menace instead of argument, subject them to reprobation and ridicule.

Mr. Kinghorn gives it as his decided opinion, that for a pædobaptist statedly to attend the ministry of a baptist, is a dereliction of principle. A great gulf ought, in his apprehension, to be fixed between the two denominations. But how is it possible on this system to indulge the hope of effecting a revolution in the public mind, when all the usual channels of communication are cut off, and the means of rational conviction laid under an interdict? If the hearers of both denominations are bound to confine their attendance to teachers who will esteem it their duty to confirm them in their respective persuasions, the transition to an opposite system may be deemed almost a miracle. It were more natural to suppose that, in this instance, as well as others of greater moment, "faith cometh by hearing," than that a crop should spring up where no seed, or none but what is of an opposite kind, has been sown.

It is not a little curious to find it objected to the prin-

ciples we are attempting to defend, that they are adapted to an imperfect, rather than a perfect state of things; when the utility of the entire system of christianity results entirely from such an adaptation, and is nothing more than a sublime and mysterious condescension to human weakness and imperfection. What is the gospel but a proposed alliance, in which infinite purity comes into contact with pollution, infinite justice with human demerits, and ineffable riches with hopeless penury? "Mixed communion," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "displays another genuine feature of error. It is only to be found (even on the concession of its warmest supporters) in that mingled state of things, which takes place between the first purity of the church and the ultimate display of gospel light. In the times of the apostles it had no place; nor do we expect it will be found when 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God.'"* Specious as this proposition may appear, it is in reality nothing but a truism. We both suppose infant baptism to be an innovation unknown in primitive times. But mixed communion means nothing else than the union of baptists and pædobaptists in the same religious society. To say, therefore, that no such practice was known in the times of the apostles, is to say that the two denominations were not united while there was only one—a profound discovery, the merit of which we will not dispute with this author. But when he proceeds to remark, that it will be equally unknown in the period usually styled the latter-day glory, we must be permitted to remind him of a state incomparably superior, and to ask him whether he supposes his exclusive system will extend there; whether the pædobaptist, dying in the possession of his supposed error, is disqualified to join "the spirits of just men made perfect; to mingle with the general assembly of the church of the first-born?" If this is not affirmed, let him reflect on the enormous impropriety of demanding a greater uniformity amongst the candidates for admission into the church militant,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 77.

than is requisite for a union with the church triumphant —of claiming from the faithful, while encompassed with darkness and imperfection, more harmony and correctness of sentiment than is necessary to qualify them "to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God"—of pretending to render a christian society an enclosure more sacred and more difficult of access, than the abode of the Divine Majesty—and of investing every little baptist teacher with the prerogative of repelling from his communion a Howe, a Leighton, or a Brainerd, whom the Lord of glory will welcome to his presence. Transubstantiation presents nothing more revolting to the dictates of common sense.

The blessedness of the future world is ever represented in scripture as the final end and scope of the christian profession: the doctrines which it embraces, the duties which it enjoins, are represented as terminating in that, as its ultimate object. Religion itself, in its most general nature, is necessary only in consequence of the relation which the subjects of it bear to a future state: "patient continuance in well doing" is requisite, because it is the only safe and legitimate way of aspiring to "glory, honour, and immortality;" and the utmost that can be said to enforce any particular branch of practice is, that it tends to prepare us for eternal felicity. The church of Christ is unquestionably ordained merely as one of the instruments of qualifying its members for the possession of eternal life. But for this, it would have had no existence; and beyond this, we can conceive no end or purpose it was intended to accomplish. In a system of means, many things may be useful on account of their tendency to facilitate the accomplishment of their object, which are not absolutely necessary. They may accelerate its attainment, or attain it with greater certainty than it could be effected in their absence. But since the necessity of means arises solely from their relation to the end, *that*, whatever it be, without which the end may certainly be secured, can never be affirmed to be *necessary*, without an absolute contradiction. Is the organization of the church, then, a means

of obtaining eternal life? Is it ordained solely with a view of preparing man for a future state of felicity, or in order to secure some temporary and secular object? If it be allowed that it is the former alone which it is designed to obtain, to assert that baptism is necessary to qualify for communion, when communion itself is only necessary as a means of preparing us for heaven, which it is allowed may with certainty be obtained without baptism, is a flat contradiction. It is to affirm that what is not essential to the attainment of a certain end, is yet a necessary part of the order of means, which is palpably absurd.

Let it be remembered, that we are far from intending to insinuate that baptism is of little moment; or that a wanton inattention to this part of the will of Christ is consistent with a well-founded assurance of salvation: our sole intention is to expose the inconsistency of supposing an involuntary mistake on this subject a sufficient bar to communion, while it is acknowledged to be none to the participation of future blessedness.

Our opponents will probably remind us of the perfect unanimity which will prevail on this subject (in our apprehension) in the heavenly world. But when will this unanimity take place? will it be previous to an admission to the society of the blessed, or subsequent to that event? If it be subsequent, in receiving believers on the ground of their vital union with Christ, we follow the order of heaven, which our opponents invert; while we indulge the hope, that in consequence of coming into a closer contact with persons whose views on the subject of baptism are correct, they will be gradually induced to embrace them; firmly persuaded that whether this is the result or not, we incur no danger in following a celestial precedent. We are not surprised at our opponents making such high pretensions to purity in the discipline and economy of their churches; we only admire their modesty in not insisting on their loftiest and sublimest distinction, which consists in their societies being more select than heaven, and in its being more difficult to become a member of a baptist church than to be saved.

The reader is requested to remember the extraordinary positions which Mr. Kinghorn has been compelled to advance, in defence of his restrictive system. He will recollect, we hope, that he has found it necessary to affirm that the most eminent saints, not excepting the illustrious army of martyrs, made no true profession of that religion for which they laboured, and for which, with a divine prodigality, they shed their blood; that though worthy of "walking with Christ in white," and of joining in the cry, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" they gave no scriptural evidence of their faith, and were consequently not entitled to its privileges; and that their claim to christian communion was defeated, *not in consequence of any specific or peculiar connexion betwixt the two ordinances in question*, but solely on account of its being one of those privileges. He has found it necessary to assert, that the terms of communion and of salvation are both immutable; that if baptism was ever necessary to salvation, it is so still; and consequently that an involuntary mistake respecting a branch of revelation is equally criminal and dangerous with its wilful rejection. He has found it necessary to affirm that pædobaptists are not received into the christian dispensation, although he expresses his confident expectation of their being interested in its blessings and justified by faith in its promises. These are but a scanty specimen of the wild and eccentric paradoxes into which this writer has been betrayed, while, in quest of new discoveries, and resolved to project an *original* defence of strict communion, he has quitted the sober path of his predecessors.

In some of the leading points of the argument he has totally abandoned what Mr. Booth considered as forming his strong hold. Thus, though he evinces an extreme reluctance to appear to coincide with the writer of these sheets in anything, he in fact concedes all that he contended for, respecting the essential difference betwixt the baptism of John and that of Christ, and entertains no doubt that the twelve disciples at Ephesus were rebaptized. Thus the *palmarium argumentum* of

his venerable predecessor is relinquished. Mr. Booth contended, that though the pædobaptists are *received* in the sense the apostle intended in that expression, their right to the Lord's supper cannot be inferred; Mr. Kinghorn denies that they *are;* and thus the two champions are at variance, *toto cœlo*, on the interpretation of the passages chiefly concerned in this controversy. As these passages* form a principal part of the gist of the debate, the intelligent reader is requested carefully to examine Mr. Kinghorn's mode of interpretation; and should it appear to be loaded with insuperable difficulties, it may with confidence be inferred, that the cause of strict communion, were it liable to no other objection is untenable. He had too much acumen to reject Mr. Booth's solution of the difficulty, could it have been plausibly supported. Conscious it could not, he has attempted to substitute another, which is accompanied with still greater, though perhaps not quite such obvious, inconveniences.

> Dextrum Scylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
> Obsidet . . . . . .

The writer is far from anticipating a speedy or sudden revolution in the sentiments of his brethren, as the consequence of his efforts in this controversy. He is contented to await the slow operation of time, in extinguishing the prejudices which time alone has produced; conscious that bodies of men are peculiarly tenacious of their habits of thinking, and that it is wisely ordained, that the conquest achieved by just and enlightened principles should be firm and durable, in proportion to the tardiness of their progress. Another generation most probably rise up, before the rust of prejudice is sufficiently worn off to leave room for the operation of reason, and the exercise of free inquiry on this subject. Our opponents, aware that a current has already set in, which threatens, at no very distant period, to

* Rom. xiv. 1. xv. 7.

sweep away their narrow and contracted system, are exerting every effort to stop it, but in vain:

> Labitur, et labetur, in omne volubilis ævum.

Mr. Kinghorn, while he acknowledges, with extreme regret, that the younger part of our ministers are generally disposed unfavourably to the cause he has attempted to advocate, expresses his conviction, that further reflection and inquiry will correct the aberrations of their youth, and recall them to the ancient path. But when was it ever known that an extension of knowledge produced a contraction of feeling, or that the effect of a more extended survey of the vast sphere of philosophical and religious speculation, was to magnify the importance of sectarian peculiarities? He anticipates this effect chiefly from the perusal of ecclesiastical history; a profound acquaintance with which is to put them in possession of the marvellous secret, that mixed communion was unknown in the ages which succeeded the universal prevalence of infant baptism. The general agreement to consider that rite as an indispensable prerequisite to communion, during those ages, is to be received, it seems, as an oracle; while the baptism which they practised is discarded as a nullity, the sole ground on which it was supposed to be necessary deemed a most dangerous error, and innumerable other opinions and usages, of equal notoriety and extent, consigned to the moles and to the bats. He must have a wonderful faculty of sanguine anticipation, who supposes that an unfettered mind will reject the authority of antiquity in every particular, except that which suits his own humour; and after considering whatever distinguishes the ecclesiastical economy of these ages, from that of dissenting societies, as a striking instance of human weakness, stop short in the career of reprobation just at the point he is pleased to prescribe. Such a procedure would be (as Cicero observes on another occasion) not to argue, but to divine; and it would be just as reasonable, after making a collection of all the peculiar opinions and practices of christian

antiquity, to determine by lot which of them should be received.

Far from indulging the apprehension of a retrograde motion from enlarged and liberal, to narrow and contracted principles, we have every reason to conclude, that the polar ice once broken, they will circulate to a much wider extent; and the revolution which has already commenced amongst those who are destined to guide the public mind, shortly produce a powerful effect on the people, who never fail, sooner or later, to follow the impulse of their public teachers. As it is this which gave rise to the present practice, so it is still by a sort of incantation, by mustering the shades of the mighty dead, of Booth and Fuller especially, who are supposed to cast a dark and frowning aspect on the petulance of modern innovation, that it is chiefly supported; and, with all due respect to the talents of Mr. Kinghorn, it may be confidently affirmed, that, but for the authority of these worthies, his weapons would produce as little execution as the dart of Priam.

Deference to great names is a sentiment which it would be base to attempt to eradicate, and impossible, were it attempted. But, like other offsprings of the mind, it is at first rude and ill-shapen. It makes no selection, no discrimination—it retains the impress of its original, entire, just as it was made: it is a vague undistinguishing admiration, which consecrates in a mass all the errors and deformities, along with the real excellencies of its object. Time only, the justest of all critics, gives it correctness and proportion, and converts what is at first merely the action of a great upon an inferior mind, into an enlightened and impartial estimate of distinguished worth. The effect produced by coming into an intimate contact with a commanding intellect, is of a mixed nature; it subdues and enslaves the very persons whom it enlightens, and almost invariably leaves a portion of its sediment, where it deposits its wealth. It must be placed at a certain distance before we derive from it all the pure defecated good it is capable of imparting; and with all my admiration of the inestimable men already

mentioned, and my conviction of the value of their services, I am persuaded many years must elapse before we entirely surmount the effects of a long-continued dictatorship.

When the views of baptism, by which we are distinguished as a denomination, are once exonerated from the odium arising from the practice we have been opposing, and the prejudices which it has necessarily occasioned have subsided, we may justly presume that the former will be examined with more impartiality; nor is it possible to assign a reason for their having made so limited a progress, besides the extreme disgust inspired by this most unchristian and unnatural alliance. It is too much to expect an enlightened public will be eager to enroll themselves amongst the members of a sect, which displays much of the intolerance of popery, without any portion of its splendour; and prescribes, as the pledge of conversion, the renunciation of the whole christian world. While the vestibule is planted with the most repulsive forms, while *sedent in limine Diræ*, few will be intrepid enough to enter.

On Mr. Kinghorn's system, which reprobates the attendance of the members of baptists and pædobaptists upon the ministry of each other, as a dereliction of principle, to calculate the ages which must, in all probability elapse, ere our principles obtain a general prevalence, would form an amusing problem. The Hindoo chronology, which assigns to its fabulous dynasties millions and millions of years, might furnish a specimen of the scale on which such a calculation should proceed; and unless some such passion is expected to seize the members of other communities, as impelled the queen of Sheba to come from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, the projected revolution must be pronounced, in the absence of miracles, impossible. What can be the motive of the advocates of strict communion, for studiously presenting every possible obstacle to the exclusive diffusion of our principles? We might be almost tempted to conjecture, that they were afraid of

losing their title to the appellation of a "little flock," or that they consider the baptist denomination as an order of nobility or of knighthood, whose dignity is impaired in proportion as it is diffused. Be this as it may, the spirit of the age, distinguished by the superior expansion of its views, and the extensive cooperation of all sects and parties in the promotion of objects of public utility, —the little success which has accompanied the narrow and restrictive system,—the dictates of scripture, and the movements of that divine charity which those dictates have impressed,—all invite us to "consider our ways," to retrace our steps, and endeavour to draw our fellow-christians "by the cords of love, and the bands of a man." When we have learned to "make no difference," where the Searcher of hearts makes none; when we show an alacrity in embracing all who love Jesus Christ, as members of the same mystical body, when, in conformity to the genius of christianity, there is with us neither Jew nor Greek, neither baptist nor pædobaptist, but Christ is all in all,—the reasons on which our peculiar practice is founded, will in all probability, meet with a very different reception from what has hitherto attended them, accompanied as they have been, with a system of impotent oppression, and unmerited contumely. But whether these expectations, to their full extent, are realized or not, we shall at least improve ourselves, wipe off the reproach of bigotry and intolerance, and rise in the esteem of an enlightened and religious public, by convincing them that our zeal for a ceremonial institution has not betrayed us into a forgetfulness that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Thus have I endeavoured to reply to the reasoning of my opponent on this subject: whether my answer will be deemed by a discerning public conclusive or otherwise, I trust they will be convinced that no attempt has been made to evade the force of his arguments, nor anything passed over in silence, to which he can be supposed to attach the least degree of importance. My anxiety to leave nothing untouched, which bears any relation to the merits of the controversy, has extended this reply beyond my wishes and my expectation; conceiving it better to incur the charge of tediousness, than that of discussing a polemical point of high importance, in a slight and superficial manner. The mode of establishing a doctrine in opposition to prevailing opinions and prejudices, is necessarily much more circuitous than the strict laws of reasoning require, in exhibiting its evidence to the understanding at a subsequent period. In the militant state of a doctrine, it is generally found necessary to incur frequent repetitions, to represent the same idea in a variety of lights, and to encounter a multitude of petty cavils and verbal sophisms, which, in its farther progress, sink into oblivion. When, in consequence of a series of discussions, a doctrine is firmly rooted in the public mind, the proof by which it is sustained may be presented, without impairing its force, in a more compact and elegant form; and the time, I am persuaded is not very remote, when it will be matter of surprise that it should have been thought necessary to employ so many words in evincing a truth, so nearly self-evident, as that which it is the object of the writer of these pages to establish. The flimsy sophistry by which it is attempted to be obscured, and the tedious process of reasoning opposed to these attempts, will be alike forgotten, and the very existence of the controversy remembered only among other melancholy monuments of human imperfection.

Some acceleration of that period the author certainly anticipates from his present and his former productions, though he is fully aware that the chief obstacles which impede its approach are such as it is not in the power of argument alone to subdue. Reasoning supplies an effectual antidote to mere speculative error, but opposes a feeble barrier to inveterate prejudice, and to that contraction of feeling, which is the fruitful parent of innumerable mistakes and misconceptions in religion. There is no room, however, for despondency; for, as the dictates of christian charity will always be found to coincide

with the justest principles of reason, the first effect of inquiry will be to enlighten the mind, the second to expand and enlarge the heart; and when the Spirit is poured down from on high, he will effectually teach us that God is *Love*, and that we never please him more than when we embrace with open arms, without distinction of sect or party, all who bear his image.

A

SHORT STATEMENT

OF THE

REASONS

FOR

CHRISTIAN IN OPPOSITION TO PARTY COMMUNION.

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[PUBLISHED IN 1826.]

PREFACE.

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After having discussed so largely, in some former publications, the question of strict communion, that is, the prevailing practice in the Baptist denomination, of confining their fellowship to members of their own community, it was not my intention to trouble the public with the subject any further, not having the least ambition for the last word in controversy. But it has been suggested to me, that it would not be difficult to condense the substance of the argument within a smaller compass, so as to render it accessible to such as have neither the leisure nor the inclination to peruse a large performance. It has been my endeavour to cut off every thing superfluous, and, without doing injury to the merits of the cause, to present the reasoning which sustains it in a concise and popular form: how far I have succeeded, must be left to the judgement of the reader.

I would only remark here, that all I have seen and heard concurs to convince me, that the practice of strict communion rests almost entirely on *authority*, and that were the influence of a few great names withdrawn, it would sink under its own weight. Among those of recent date, none has been more regarded than that of the late venerable Fuller; and as he left a manuscript on this subject to be published after his death, he is considered as having deposed his dying testimony in its favour. That he felt some predilection to a practice to which he had been so long accustomed, and whose propriety was very rarely questioned in his early days, is

freely admitted; but that he all along felt some hesitation on the subject, and that his mind was not completely made up, I am induced to believe from several circumstances. First, from the fact of his proposing himself to commune at Cambridge, with the full knowledge of there being pædobaptists present. Secondly, from a conversation which passed, many years ago, between him and the writer of these lines. In reply to his observation, that we act precisely on the same principle with our pædobaptist brethren, since they also insist on baptism as an essential pre-requisite to communion, it was remarked, that this was a mere *argumentum ad hominem;* it might serve to silence the clamours of those pædobaptists who, while they adhered to that principle, charged us with bigotry; but that still it did not touch the merits of the question, since a previous inquiry occurs, whether any thing more is requisite to communion, on scriptural grounds, than a vital union with Christ; his answer was, *When mixed communion is placed on that footing, I never yet ventured to attack it.* Hence I am compelled to consider his posthumous tract rather as a trial of what might be adduced on that side of the controversy, with a view to provoke further inquiry, than the result of deliberate and settled conviction. Be this as it may, great as his merits were, he was but a man, and as such liable to err, even on subjects of much greater importance. All I wish is, that without regard to human names or authorities, the matter in debate may be entirely determined by an unprejudiced appeal to reason and scripture.

The prevalence of this disposition to bow to authority, and to receive opinions upon trust, is strikingly illustrated by the following anecdote. A highly respected friend of mine, on asking one of his deacons, a man of primitive piety and integrity, what objections he had to mixed communion, he replied, with great simplicity, that he had two; in the first place, Mr. Fuller did not approve of it; and in the next, the scripture declares, that "he who pulls down a hedge, a serpent shall bite him." The

good man very properly placed that reason first which carried the greatest weight with it.

In short, there is a certain false refinement and subtlety in the argument for strict communion, which would never occur to a plain man, who was left solely to the guidance of scripture. In common with almost every other error, it derived its origin from the public teachers of religion, and with a change of sentiment in them, it will gradually disappear; nor will it be long ere our churches will be surprised that they suffered themselves to be betrayed, by specious, but hollow sophistry, into a practice so repulsive and so impolitic.

Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas.

October 7, 1826.

A SHORT STATEMENT.

It is admitted, by all denominations of christians, with the exception of one, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is of perpetual obligation, and that it was designed by its Founder for one of the principal indications and expressions of that fraternal affection which ought to distinguish his followers. Though the communion of saints is of larger extent, comprehending all those sentiments and actions by which christians are especially united, the joint participation of this rite is universally acknowledged to constitute an important branch of that communion. So important a part has it been considered, that it has usurped the name of the whole; and when any dispute arises respecting the terms of communion, it is generally understood to relate to the terms of admission to the Lord's table.

Whether all real christians are entitled to share in this privilege, whether it forms a part of that spiritual provision which belongs to the whole family of the faithful, or whether it is the exclusive patrimony of a sect, who (on the ground of their supposed imperfection) are authorized to repel the rest, is the question which it is my purpose, in the following pages, briefly and calmly to discuss.

The first conclusion to which we should naturally arrive, would probably favour the more liberal system; we should be ready to suppose that he who is accepted of Christ ought also to be accepted of his brethren, and that he whose right to the thing signified was not questioned, possessed an undoubted right to the outward sign. There are some truths which are so self-evident, that a formal attempt to prove them has the appearance

of trifling, where the premises and the conclusion so nearly coincide, that it is not easy to point out the intermediate links that at once separate and connect them. Whether the assertion, that all sincere christians are entitled to a place at the Lord's table is of that description, will more clearly appear as we advance; but I must be permitted to say, that a feeling of the kind just mentioned has occasioned the greatest difficulty I have experienced in this discussion.

It is well known that a diversity of sentiment has long subsisted in this country, in relation to the proper subjects of baptism, together with the mode of administering that rite. While the great body of the christian world administer baptism to infants, and adopt the practice of sprinkling or pouring the sacramental water, there are some who contend that baptism should be confined to those who are capable of understanding the articles of the christian religion, or, in other words, to adults, and that the proper mode is the immersion of the whole body. They who maintain the last of these opinions, were formerly designated by the appellation of *anabaptists;* but as that term implied that they assumed a right of *repeating* baptism, when in reality their only reason for baptizing such as had been sprinkled in their infancy, was, that they looked upon the baptism of infants as a mere human invention, the candour of modern times has changed the invidious appellation of anabaptist to the more simple one of baptist.

It is not my intention to attempt the defence of that class of christians, though their views are entirely in accordance with my own; one consequence, however, necessarily results. We are compelled, by virtue of them, to look upon the great mass of our fellow-christians as *unbaptized.* On no other ground can we maintain our principles, or justify our conduct. Hence it has been inferred, too hastily in my opinion, that we are bound to abstain from their communion, whatever judgement we may form of their sincerity and piety. Baptism, it is alleged, is, under all possible circumstances, an indispensable term of communion; and however highly we may esteem many of our pædobaptist brethren, yet, as we cannot but deem them *unbaptized,* we must of necessity consider them as disqualified for an approach to the Lord's table. It is evident that this reasoning rests entirely on the assumption that baptism is invariably a necessary condition of communion—an opinion which it is not surprising the baptists should have embraced, since it has long passed current in the christian world, and been received by nearly all denominations of christians. The truth is, it has never, till of late, become a practical question, nor could it while all parties acknowledged each other's baptism. It was only when a religious denomination arose, whose principles compelled them to deny the validity of any other baptism besides that which they themselves practised, that the question respecting the relation which that ordinance bears to the Lord's supper, could have any influence on practice. But a doctrine which can have no possible influence on practice is received with little or no examination; and to this must be imputed the facility with which it has been so generally admitted, that baptism must necessarily and invariably precede an admission to the Lord's table. The wide circulation, however, of this doctrine, ought undoubtedly to have the effect of softening the severity of censure on that conduct (however singular it may appear) which is its necessary result: such is that of the great majority of the baptists, in confining their communion to those whom they deem baptized; wherein they act precisely on the same principle with all other christians, who assume it for granted that baptism is an essential preliminary to the reception of the sacrament. The point on which they differ is the nature of that institution, which we place in immersion, and of which we suppose rational and accountable agents the only fit subjects; this opinion, combined with the other generally received one, that none are entitled to receive the eucharist but such as have been baptized, leads inevitably to the practice which seems so singular, and gives so much offence—the restricting of communion to our own denomination. Let it be admitted that bap-

tism is, under all circumstances, a necessary condition of church fellowship, and it is impossible for the baptists to act otherwise. That their practice in this particular is harsh and illiberal, is freely admitted, but it is the infallible consequence of the opinion generally entertained respecting communion, conjoined with their peculiar views of the baptismal rite. The recollection of this may suffice to rebut the ridicule, and silence the clamour, of those who loudly condemn the baptists for a proceeding, which, were they but to change their opinion on the subject of baptism, their own principles would compel them to adopt. They both concur in a common principle, from which the practice deemed so offensive is the necessary result.

Considered as an *argumentum ad hominem*, or an appeal to the avowed principles of our opponents, this reasoning may be sufficient to shield us from that severity of reproach to which we are often exposed, nor ought we to be censured for acting upon a system which is sanctioned by our accusers. Still it leaves the real merits of the question untouched; for the inquiry remains open, whether baptism *is* an indispensable pre-requisite to communion; in other words, whether they stand in such a relation to each other, that the involuntary neglect of the first, incurs a forfeiture of the title to the last.

The chief, I might say the only, argument for the restricted plan of communion, is derived from the example of the apostles, and the practice of the primitive church. It is alleged, with some appearance of plausibility, that the first duty enjoined on the primitive converts to christianity was to be baptized, that no repeal of the law has taken place since, that the apostles uniformly baptized their converts before they admitted them to the sacrament, and that, during the first and purest ages, the church knew of no members who had not submitted to that rite; and that, consequently, in declining a union with those, whom, however estimable in other respects, we are obliged to consider as *unbaptized*, we are following the highest precedents, and treading in the hallowed

steps of the inspired teachers of religion. Such, in a few words, is the sum and substance of their reasoning who are the advocates of strict communion; and as it approaches with a lofty and imposing air, and has prevailed with thousands, to embrace what appears to me a most serious error, I must bespeak the reader's patience, while I endeavour to sift it to the bottom, in order to expose its fallacy.

Precedent derived from the practice of inspired men is entitled to be regarded as *law*, in exact proportion as the spirit of it is copied, and the *principle* on which it proceeds is acted upon. If, neglectful of these, we attend to the letter only, we shall be betrayed into the most serious mistakes, since there are numerous actions recorded of the apostles in the government of the church, which it would be the height of folly and presumption to imitate. Above all things, it is necessary, before we proceed to found a rule of action on precedent, carefully to investigate the circumstances under which it occurred, and the reasons on which it was founded. The apostles, it is acknowledged, admitted none to the Lord's supper, but such as were previously baptized; but under what circumstances did they maintain this course? It was at a time when a mistake respecting the will of the Supreme Legislator on the subject of baptism was impossible; it was while a diversity of opinion relating to it could not possibly subsist, because inspired men were at hand, ready to remove every doubt, and satisfy the mind of every honest inquirer. It was under circumstances that must have convicted him who declined compliance with that ordinance, of wilful prevarication, and stubborn resistance to the delegates and representatives of Christ, who commissioned them to promulgate his laws, with an express assurance that "whoever rejected them, rejected him, and whoever received them, received him," and that to refuse to obey their word, exposed the offender to a severer doom than was allotted to Sodom and Gomorrah.* Their instructions were too plain to be

* Matt. x. 14, 15.

mistaken, their authority too sacred to be contemned by a professor of christianity, without being guilty of daring impiety. In such a state of things, it may be asked, how could they have acted differently from what they did? To have received into the church men who disputed their inspiration and despised their injunctions, would have been to betray their trust, and to renounce their pretensions as the living depositaries of the mind of Christ: to have admitted those who, believing their inspiration, yet refused a compliance with their orders, would have let into the church the most unheard-of licentiousness, and polluted it, by incorporating with its members the worst of men. Neither of these could be thought of, and no other alternative remained but to insist as a test of sincerity on a punctual compliance with what was known and acknowledged as the apostolic doctrine. "We are of God," says St. John: "he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."* In short, the apostles refused to impart the external privileges of the church to such as impugned their authority, or contemned their injunctions, which, whoever persisted in the neglect of baptism at that time, and in those circumstances, must necessarily have done.

But in declining the communion of modern pædobaptists, however eminent their piety, there is really nothing analogous to that method of proceeding. The resemblance fails in its most essential features. In repelling an unbaptized person from their communion, supposing such a one to have presented himself, they would have rejected the violator of a known precept; he whom we refuse is, at most, chargeable only with mistaking it. The former must either have neglected an acknowledged precept, and thus evinced a mind destitute of principle, or he must have set the authority of the apostles at defiance, and thus have classed with parties of the worst description. Our pædobaptist brethren are exposed to

* 1 John iv. 6.

neither of these charges: convince them that it is their duty to be baptized, in the method which we approve, and they stand ready, many of them at least, we cannot doubt, stand ready to perform it; convince them that it is a necessary inference from the correct interpretation of the apostolic commission, and they will, without hesitation, bow to that authority.

The most rigid baptist will probably admit that, however clear and irresistible the evidence of his sentiments may appear to himself, there are those whom it fails to convince, and some of them, certainly, illustrious examples of piety; men who would tremble at the thought of deliberately violating the least of the commands of Christ or of his apostles; men whose character and principles, consequently, form a striking contrast with those of the persons whom it is allowed the apostles would have repelled. But to separate ourselves from the best of men, because the apostles would have withdrawn from the worst, to confound the broadest moral distinctions, by awarding the same treatment to involuntary and conscientious error which they were prepared to inflict on stubborn and wilful disobedience, is certainly a very curious method of following apostolic precedent. "The letter killeth," says St. Paul, "the spirit maketh alive." Whether the contrariety of these was ever more strongly marked, than by such a method of imitating the apostles, let the reader judge.

For the clearer illustration of this point, let us suppose a case. A person proposes himself as a candidate for admission to a baptist church. The minister inquires into his views of the ordinance of baptism, and respectfully asks whether he is convinced of the divine authority of the rite which was administered to him in his infancy. He confesses he is not, that on mature deliberation and inquiry he considers it as a human invention. On his thus avowing his conviction, he is urged to confess Christ before men, by a prmopt compliance with what he is satisfied is a part of his revealed will: he hesitates, he refuses, alleging that it is not essential to salvation, that it is a mere external rite, and that some of

the holiest of men have died in the neglect of it. Here is a parallel case to that of a person who should have declined the ordinance of baptism in primitive times; and in entire consistence with the principles which we are maintaining, we have no hesitation in affirming, that the individual in question is disqualified for christian communion. To receive him under such circumstances, would be sanctioning the want of principle, and pouring contempt on the christian precepts. Yet the conduct we have now supposed would be less criminal than to have shrunk from baptism in the apostolic age, because the evidence by which our views are supported, though sufficient for every practical purpose, is decidedly inferior to that which accompanied their first promulgation: the utmost that we can pretend, is a very high probability; the primitive converts possessed an absolute certainty. Now since we are prepared to visit a degree of delinquency inferior to that which would have ensured the rejection of a candidate by the apostles, with the same severity, how preposterous is it to charge us with departing from apostolical precedent! In the same circumstances, or in circumstances nearly the same, we are ready instantly to act the same part: let the circumstances be essentially varied, and our proceeding is proportionably different. The apostles refused the communion of such, and such only, as were insincere, "who held the truth in unrighteousness," avowing their conviction of one system, and acting upon another: and wherever similar indications display themselves, we do precisely the same. They admitted the weak and erroneous, providing their errors were not of a nature subversive of christianity; and so do we. They tolerated men whose sentiments differed from their own, providing they did not rear the standard of revolt, by a deliberate resistance to the only infallible authority; and such precisely is the course we pursue. We bear with those who mistake the dictates of inspiration, in points which are not essential; but with none who wilfully contradict, or neglect them. In the government of the church, as far as our means of information reach, the

immediate ambassadors of Christ appear to have set us an example of much gentleness and mildness, to have exercised a tender consideration of human imperfection, and to have reserved all their severity for a contumacious rejection of their guidance, and disdain of their instructions. And wherever these features appear, we humbly tread in their steps; being as little disposed as they, to countenance or receive those who impugn their inspiration, or censure their decisions.

They were certainly strangers to that scheme of ecclesiastical polity, which proposes to divide the mystical body of Christ into two parts, one consisting of such as enjoy communion with him, the other of such as are entitled to commune with each other. In no part of their writings, is the faintest vestige to be discerned of that state of things of which our opponents are enamoured, where a vast majority of sincere christians are deemed disqualified for christian fellowship, and while their pretensions to acceptance with God, and a title to eternal life, are undisputed, are yet to be kept in a state of seclusion from the visible church. Had they in any part of their Epistles appeared to broach such a doctrine; had they lavished high encomiums on the faith and piety of those with whom they refused to associate at the Lord's supper, our astonishment at sentiments so singular and so eccentric, would have been such, that scarcely any conceivable uniformity of manuscripts or of versions could have accredited the passages that contained them. That the primitive church was composed of professed believers, and none debarred from its privileges, but such whose faith was essentially erroneous, or their character doubtful, is a matter of fact which appears on the very surface of the inspired records, and was probably never called in question, in any age or country, until an opposite principle was avowed and acted upon by the modern baptists, who appropriate its title and its immunities to themselves, while, with strange inconsistency, they proclaim their conviction, that the persons whom they exclude are indisputably in possession of its interior and spiritual privileges. For this portentous separation

of the internal from the outward and visible privileges of christianity; for confining the latter to a mere handful of such as have "obtained like precious faith with themselves," in vain will they seek for support in the example of the apostles. They repeatedly and earnestly warn us against resting in external advantages, and of the danger of substituting the outward sign for the inward and spiritual grace; but never give the slightest intimation of the possibility of possessing the first, without being entitled to the last. The assertion of such an opinion, and the practice founded upon it, the reader will at once perceive, is a departure from the precedent and example of the earliest age, which it would be difficult to parallel.

In opposition, however, to all that has been urged to show the obvious disparity between the two cases, our opponents still reiterate the cry, The apostles did not tolerate the omission of baptism, and therefore we are not justified in tolerating it! But is the omission of a duty to be judged of in relation to its moral quality, without any regard to circumstances, without any consideration, whether it be voluntary or involuntary, whether it proceed from perversity of will, or error of judgement, from an erroneous interpretation of our Lord's precepts, or a contempt of his injunctions; and supposing our pædobaptist brethren to be sincere and conscientious, is there any resemblance between them and those whom the apostles, it is allowed, would have repelled, except in the mere circumstance of their being both unbaptized, the one because they despised the apostolic injunctions, the other because they mistake them? The former (supposing them to have existed at all) must have been men over whose conscience the word of God had no power; the latter tremble at his word, and are restrained from following our example by deference to his will. If such opposite characters are the natural objects of a contrary state of feeling, they must be equally so of a contrary treatment; nor can any thing be more preposterous than to confound them together, under the pretence of a regard to apostolic

precedent. Our treatment of mankind should undoubtedly be the expression of our feelings, and regulated by our estimate of their character. Strict communion prescribes the contrary; it sets the conduct and the feelings at variance, and erects into a duty the mortification of our best and holiest propensities.

The discipline of the church, as prescribed by Christ and his apostles, is founded on principles applicable to every age and to every combination of events to which it is liable, in a world replete with change, where new forms of error, new modes of aberration from the paths of rectitude and truth, are destined to follow in rapid and unceasing succession. Among these we are compelled to enumerate the prevailing notions of the christian world on the subject of baptism—an error which it is obvious could have no subsistence during the age of the apostles. Here, then, arises a new case; and it becomes a matter of serious inquiry, how it is to be treated. It plainly cannot be decided by a reference to apostolic precedent, because nothing of this kind then existed, or could exist. The precept which enjoined the baptism of new converts might be resisted, but it could not be mistaken; and therefore no inference can be drawn from the treatment which it is admitted the apostles would have assigned to wilful disobedience, that is applicable to the case of involuntary error. The only method of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, is to consider how they conducted themselves towards sincere, though erring christians, together with the temper they recommend us to cultivate towards such as labour under mistakes and misconceptions not inconsistent with piety. Without expecting a specific direction for the regulation of our conduct in this identical particular, which would be to suppose the error in question *not* new, it is quite sufficient if the general principle of toleration which the New Testament enjoins, is found to comprehend the present instance.

If action be founded on conviction, as it undoubtedly is in all well-regulated minds, we are as much obliged to mould our sentiments into an agreement with those of

the apostles, as our conduct: inspired precedents of thought are as authoritative as those of action. The advocates of strict communion are clamorous in their demand that, in relation to church fellowship, we should treat all pædobaptists exactly in the same manner as the apostles would have treated unbaptized persons in their day. But must we not for the same reason *think* the same of them? This, however, they disclaim as much as we do: they are perfectly sensible, nor have they the hardihood to deny, that the difference is immense between a conscientious mistake of the mind of Christ on a particular subject, and a deliberate contempt or neglect of it. Who can doubt that the apostles would be the first to feel this distinction; and, as they would undoubtedly, in common with all conscientious persons, regulate their conduct by their sentiments, that, could they be personally consulted, they would recommend a correspondent difference of treatment? To sum up the argument in a few words. Nothing can be more hollow and fallacious than the pretension of our opponents that they are guided by inspired precedent, for we have no precedent in the case; in other words, we have no example of the manner in which they conducted themselves towards such as fell into an error on the subject of baptism; the Scriptures make no allusion to such an error which attaches at present to many most tenacious of its authority, humbly submissive to its dictates, and deeply imbued with its spirit; to men, in a word, of the most opposite character to those who may be supposed, in consequence of setting light by the authority of inspired teachers, to have neglected baptism in the first ages.

Thus much may suffice for apostolic precedent. There is still one more view of the subject to which the attention of the reader is requested for a moment. It remains to be considered whether there is any *peculiar connexion* between the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, either in the nature of things or by divine appointment, so as to render it improper to administer the one without the other. That there is no *natural* connexion is obvious. They were instituted at different times and for different purposes; baptism is a mode of professing our faith in the blessed Trinity, the Lord's supper as a commemoration of the dying love of the Redeemer: the former is the act of an individual, the latter of a society. The words which contain our warrant for the celebration of the eucharist, convey no allusion to baptism whatever: those which prescribe baptism carry no anticipative reference to the eucharist. And as it is demonstrable that John's baptism was a separate institution from that which was enacted after our Lord's resurrection, the Lord's supper is evidently *anterior* to baptism, and the original communicants consisted entirely of such as had not received that ordinance. To all appearance, the rites in question rest on independent grounds. But perhaps there is a *special* connexion between the two, arising from *divine appointment*. If this be the case, it will be easy to point it out. Rarely, if ever, are they mentioned together, and on no occasion is it asserted, or insinuated, that the validity of the sacrament depends on the previous observation of the baptismal ceremony. That there was such a connexion between circumcision and the passover, we learn from the explicit declaration of Moses, who asserts that "no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof." Let a similar prohibition be produced in the present instance, and the controversy is at an end.

The late excellent Mr. Fuller, in a posthumous pamphlet on this subject, laboured hard to prove an *instituted* connexion between the two ordinances; but his conclusion from the premises is so feeble and precarious, that we strongly suspect his own mind was not fully made up on the subject. His reasoning is certainly very little adapted to satisfy an impartial inquirer. The whole performance appears more like an experiment of what might be advanced in favour of a prevailing hypothesis, than the result of deep and deliberate conviction.

On this point our opponents are at variance with each other; Mr. Kinghorn roundly asserts that baptism has no more connexion with the Lord's supper than with

every other part of christianity. Thus what Mr. Fuller attempts to demonstrate as the main pillar of his cause, Mr. Kinghorn abandons without scruple. What a fortunate position is that to which men may arrive, who proceed in the most opposite directions—a sort of mental antipodes, which you will reach with equal certainty, whether you advance by the east or by the west. From the title of Mr. Kinghorn's book, which is, "Baptism a term of Communion," we should be led to expect that it was his principal object to trace some *specific* relation which these rites bear to each other. No such thing: he denies there is any such relation: baptism, he declares, is no otherwise connected with the Lord's supper than it is with every other part of christianity. But on this hypothesis, it is essential to the eucharist, and consequently it is essential to every part of christianity; so that the omission of it, from whatever cause, is such an error in the first concoction, that it vitiates every branch of religion, disqualifies for all its duties, and incurs the forfeiture of all its privileges. This is the statement of a man who makes loud professions of attachment to our pædobaptist brethren; nor can he escape from this strange dilemma but by retracing his steps, and taking his stand with Mr. Fuller on a supposed *instituted* relation between the two ordinances. Meanwhile, it is instructive to observe in what inextricable labyrinths the acutest minds are entangled, which desert the high road of common sense, in pursuit of fanciful theories.

Having cleared the way, by showing that scripture precedent, properly interpreted, affords no countenance or support to strict communion, the remaining task is very easy. For nothing can be more evident, than that the whole genius of christianity is favourable to the most cordial and affectionate treatment of our fellow-christians. To love them fervently, to bear with their imperfections, and cast the mantle of forgiveness over their infirmities, is to fulfil the law of Christ. A schism in his mystical body is deprecated as the greatest evil, and whatever tends to promote it is subjected to the severest

reprobation. "Now I beseech you, by the name of the Lord Jesus," is the language of St. Paul, "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement. For it has been declared unto me, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" In applying these, and innumerable other passages of similar import, to the point under discussion, two questions occur. First, Are our pædobaptist brethren a part of the mystical body of Christ? or, in other words, Do they form a portion of that church which he has purchased by his precious blood? If they are not, they are not in a state of salvation, since none can be in that state who are not vitally united to Christ. The Bible acknowledges but two classes into which the whole human race is distributed, the church and the world; there is no intermediate condition; whoever is not of the first necessarily belongs to the last. But the advocates for strict communion are loud in their professions of esteem for pious pædobaptists; nor is there any thing they would more resent, than a doubt of their sincerity in that particular. The persons whom they exclude from their communion are then, by their own confession, a part of the flock of Christ, a portion of his mystical body, and of that church which he has bought with his blood.

The next question is, whether a formal separation from them, on account of their imputed error, amounts to what the scripture styles *schism?* Supposing one part of the church at Corinth had formally severed themselves from the other, and established a separate communion, allowing those whom they had forsaken, at the same time, the title of sincere christians, would this have been considered as a *schism?* That it would, is demonstrable from the language of St. Paul, who accuses the Corin-

thians of having *schisms** among them, though they never dreamed of forming a distinct and separate communion. If they are charged with schism, on account of that spirit of contention, and that alienation of their affections from each other, which merely tended to an open rupture, how much more would they have incurred that censure had they actually proceeded to that extremity? *Schism*, in its primitive and literal sense, signifies the breaking of a substance into two or more parts, and when figuratively applied to a body of men, it denotes the division of it into parties; and though it may be applied to such a state of contention as consists with the preservation of external union, it is most eminently applicable to a society whose bond of union is dissolved, and where one part rejects the other from its fellowship. If there is any meaning in terms, this is schism in its highest sense. The great apostle of the Gentiles illustrates the union of the faithful, by that which subsists between the members of the natural body. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." He shows, in a beautiful and impressive manner, that the several members have each his distinct function, and are pervaded by a common sympathy, with the express design "that there be no schism in the body." But when one part of the christian church avowedly excludes another from their communion, when they refuse to unite in the most distinguishing branch of social worship, and hold themselves in a state of seclusion, they virtually say to the party thus repelled, "We have no need of thee;" they cut themselves off from the body, and are guilty of a schism so open and conspicuous, that none can fail to perceive it. How is it possible for them to evade the conclusion to which this reasoning conducts us, unless they are prepared to deny the claim of the pædobaptists to be regarded as the members of Christ, or place them in some intermediate station betwixt the world and the church? But the language of the New Testament, which uniformly identifies the objects of the

* The original word rendered divisions, is σχισματα, *schisms*.

divine favour with the members of Christ's church, is directly opposed to such a fiction. "He loved the *church*, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, by the washing of water through the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

It deserves the serious consideration of our opponents, that they are *contending* for that schism in the body of Christ, against which he so fervently prayed, so anxiously guarded, and which his apostles represent as its greatest calamity and reproach. "The glory," said our Lord, "which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Here it cannot be doubted that our pædobaptist brethren are comprehended in this prayer, because our Lord declares it was preferred, not merely for the disciples then existing, but for those also who should hereafter believe through their word, adding, "that they *all* may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." In these words, we find him praying for a visible union among his disciples—such a union as the world might easily perceive; and this he entreats in behalf of them all, that they *all* may be one. The advocates of strict communion plead for a visible *disunion;* nor will it avail them to reply that they cultivate a fraternal affection towards christians of other denominations, while they insist on such a visible separation as must make it apparent to the world that they are *not* one. Internal sentiments of esteem are cognizable only by the Searcher of hearts; external indications are all that the world has to judge by; and so far are they from exhibiting these, that they value themselves in maintaining such a position towards their fellow-christians, as confounds them, in a very important point, with infidels and heathens. If a rent and division in the body is pregnant with so much scandal and offence as the Scriptures represent it, if the spirit of

love and concord is the distinguishing badge of the christian profession, it is surprising it has never occurred to them, that by insisting on such a separation as was unheard of in the primitive times, every approach to which is denounced in scripture as a most serious evil, they are acting in direct opposition to the genius of the gospel, and the solemn injunctions of its inspired teachers. What degree of criminality may attach to such a procedure it is not for us to determine; but we have no hesitation in affirming, that it is most abhorrent from the intention of the Head of the church, and miserably compensated by that more correct view of the ordinance of baptism, which is alleged in its support. "Charity is the end of the commandment," "the fulfilling of the law;" and since the religion of Christ is not ceremonial, but vital, and consists less in correct opinions, and ritual observances, than in those graces of the Spirit, which are the "hidden man of the heart," it deserves serious consideration, whether so palpable a violation of the unity of the church is not more offensive in the eyes of Him who "tries the hearts and the reins," than an involuntary mistake of a ceremonial precept.

Here we must be allowed once more to recur to the vain boast of a scrupulous adherence to the example of the apostles, (the futility of which has, I trust, been sufficiently demonstrated,) and request our opponents to reflect for a moment on their essential deviation in this particular. Say, did the apostles refuse the communion of good men? Did they set the example of dividing them into two classes, a qualified and a disqualified class; and while they acknowledged the latter were objects of the divine favour, equally with themselves, enjoin on their converts the duty of disowning them at the Lord's table? Are any traces to be discovered in the New Testament of a society of *Purists*, who, under the pretence of superior illumination on one subject, kept themselves aloof from the christian world, excluding from their communion myriads of those whom they believed to be heirs of salvation? Did they narrow their views of church fellowship, as Mr. Kinghorn avows is the case of the

modern baptists, to the purpose of holding up to view *one neglected truth*? On this plan, as many separate communions will be witnessed as there are varieties of religious taste and predilection, while each fancies it perceives some neglected duty, or some truth not rendered sufficiently prominent, till almost every inquiry will give birth to some solitary and antisocial sect. The direct tendency of such a principle, is not merely to annihilate the unity of the church, but to contract the heart, to narrow the understanding, and, in the room of "holding forth the word of life," to invest every petty speculation, and minute opinion, with the dignity of a fundamental truth.

The revival or propagation of some one particular truth being the avowed object of their union, the members of such a society will almost inevitably attach to it an undue importance; and, as their attention will be chiefly directed towards that in which they differ from others, and in which they are conceived to excel, it will be a miracle if they escape a censorious, conceited, disputatious spirit. While their constitution is founded, not so much on a separation from the world, as from the church, they will be almost irresistibly tempted to transfer to the latter a large portion of the associations and feelings, of which the former is the proper object.

How refreshing is it to turn from those rigid and repulsive principles, to the contemplation of the generous maxims of the New Testament! "Him that is weak in the faith," says St. Paul, "receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations;"* and after illustrating his meaning, by adducing examples of various diversities of sentiment amongst his converts, he proceeds to inculcate the most perfect mutual toleration. It is observable, that the differences of opinion which he specifies related to the obligation of certain positive institutes, to which, though abrogated by the new dispensation, part of the church adhered, while its more enlightened mem-

* Rom. xiv. 1

bers understood and embraced the liberty with which Christ had made them free. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." A moment's attention to the connexion will convince the reader, that the term *weak*, in both these passages, denotes persons whose conceptions are erroneous; for the inspired writer is not adverting to the different degrees of conviction with which the same truths are embraced, but to a palpable difference of judgement. Thus far, the case here decided is precisely similar to that under present discussion: our difference from the pædobaptists turns on the nature and obligation of a positive institute. The error of which St. Paul enjoined the toleration, consisted in adhering to certain ceremonies which had been abrogated; the error with which we are concerned, consists in mistaking a ceremony which is still in force. Neither of the ancient, nor of the modern error, is it pretended that they are fundamental, or that they endanger the salvation of those who hold them. Thus far they stand on the same footing, and the presumption is that they ought to be treated in the same manner. Before we come to this conclusion, however, it behoves us to examine the *principle* on which the apostle enjoins toleration, and if this is applicable in its full extent to the case of our pædobaptist brethren, no room is left for doubt. The *principle* plainly is, that the error in question was not of such magnitude as to preclude him who maintained it from the favour of God. "Let not him who eateth, despise him who eateth not; and let not him who eateth not, judge him who eateth; *for God hath received him.* Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; *for God is able to make him stand.*" In the same manner, in the next chapter of the same Epistle, after reminding the strong that it is their duty to bear the infirmities of the weak, he adds, "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us, to the glory of the Father." If such is the reason assigned for mutual toleration, and it is acknowledged to be a sufficient one, which none can

deny without impeaching the inspiration of the writer, it is as conclusive respecting the obligation of tolerating every error which is consistent with a state of salvation, as if that error had been mentioned by name; and as few, if any, are to be met with who doubt the piety of many pædobaptists, it not only justifies their reception, but renders it an indispensable duty. Nothing can be more futile than the attempt to turn aside the edge of this reasoning, by remarking that there is no mention of baptism, and that this is not the subject of which St. Paul is treating, as though the Bible contained no general principles, no maxims of universal application, but that precise directions must be found for every possible emergence that in the lapse of ages may occur. Were it constructed upon this plan, the Bible must be infinitely more voluminous than the statutes at large. It is composed on one widely different: it gives general rules of action, broad principles, leaving them to be applied under the guidance of sound discretion; and wherever it has decided a doubtful question, accompanied with an express statement of the principle on which the decision is founded, such explanation has all the force of an apostolic canon, by which we are bound to regulate our conduct in all the variety of cases to which it applies. Hence we have only one alternative, either to deny that those who differ from us on the subject of baptism are accepted of God, or to receive them into fellowship, on exactly the *same ground*, and on the *same principle*, that Paul enjoined the toleration of sincere Christians.

Before I dismiss this part of the subject, on which the patience of the reader has been severely tasked, I must beg leave to notice a striking inconsistence in the advocates of strict communion. Nothing is more certain than that the communion of saints is by no means confined to one particular occasion, or limited to one transaction, such as that of assembling around the Lord's table; it extends to all the modes by which believers recognise each other as the members of a common head. Every expression of fraternal regard, every participation in the

enjoyments of social worship, every instance of the unity of the Spirit exerted in prayer and supplication, or in acts of christian sympathy and friendship, as truly belongs to the communion of saints, as the celebration of the eucharist. In truth, if we are strangers to communion with our fellow-christians on other occasions, it is impossible for us to enjoy it there; for the mind is not a piece of mechanism which can be set going at pleasure, whose movements are obedient to the call of time and place. Nothing short of an habitual sympathy of spirit, springing from the cultivation of benevolent feeling, and the interchange of kind offices, will secure that reciprocal delight, that social pleasure, which is the soul of christian communion. Its richest fruits are frequently reserved for private conference, like that in which the two disciples were engaged, in their way to Emmaus, when their hearts burned within them, while the Lord opened to them the Scriptures. When they take sweet counsel together, as they go to the house of God in company, when they bear each other's burthens, weep with those that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice; say, have christians no mutual fellowship? Is it not surprising that, losing sight of such obvious facts, our opponents always reason on the subject of communion as though it related merely to the sacrament? In every other particular they act just as we do.

However our opponents may deviate from scripture, let them at least be consistent with themselves, and either follow out their own principles to their just consequence, by withholding from the members of other denominations every token of fraternal regard, or freely admit them to the Lord's table. As the case stands at present, their mode of proceeding is utterly untenable. In a variety of instances they indulge themselves in those acts of communion with pædobaptists which are peculiar to christians: they frequently make them their mouth in addressing the Deity; they exchange pulpits; and even engage their assistance in exercises intended as a preparation for the eucharist;

and after lighting the flame of devotion at their torch, they most preposterously turn round to inform them, that they are not worthy to participate. It would be difficult to convince a stranger to our practice, that it were possible to be guilty of such an absurdity. Is the observance of an external rite, let me ask, a more solemn part of religion than addressing the Majesty of heaven and of earth? And shall we depute *him* to present our prayers at His footstool, who would defile a sacrament by his presence? Suppose them to relax from their rigour, and to admit pious pædobaptists to their fellowship, to what would it amount? To nothing more than a public acknowledgement of their union to Christ, and their interest in his benefits; and as they fully acknowledge both, why scruple to do it at the table of their common Lord? Why select an ordinance designed for the commemoration of the dying love of the Redeemer as the signal for displaying the banners of party; and, by reviving the remembrance of differences, elsewhere consigned to oblivion, give the utmost publicity to dissensions, which are the reproach of the church, and the triumph of the world?

The only colour invented to disguise this glaring inconsistency is so pure a logomachy, that it is difficult to speak of it with becoming gravity. They remind us, forsooth, that the expressions of christian affection in praying and preaching for each other are not church acts, as though there were some magic in the word church that could change the nature of truth, or the obligations of duty. If it is our duty to recognise those as fellow-christians who are really such, what is there in the idea of a church that should render it improper there? If the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," it is the proper place for the fullest disclosure of its secrets; and if christians are under an obligation to love each other with a pure heart fervently, its organization can never have been designed to contract the heart, by confining the movements and expressions of charity within narrower limits. The duty of churches originates in that of the individuals of which they consist, so that

when we have ascertained the sentiments and principles which ought to actuate the christian in his private capacity, we possess the standard to which the practice of churches should be uniformly adjusted.

Nor is it in this particular only, that the persons whose opinions we are controverting are betrayed into lamentable inconsistency. Their concessions on another branch of the subject, lay them open to the same imputation. They acknowledge that many pædobaptists stand high in the favour of God; enjoy intimate communion with the Redeemer; and would, on their removal hence, be instantaneously admitted to glory. Now, it seems the suggestion of common sense, that the greater includes the less, that they who have a title to the most sublime privileges of christianity, the favour of God, the fellowship of Christ, and the hope of glory, must be unquestionably entitled to that ordinance whose sole design is to prepare us for the perfect fruition of these blessings. To suppose it possible to have an interest in the great redemption, without being allowed to commemorate it; that he may possess the substance who is denied the shadow, and, though qualified for the worship of heaven, be justly debarred from earthly ordinances, is such an anomaly as cannot fail to draw reprobation on the system of which it is the necessary consequence. Men will, ere long, tremble at the thought of being more strict than Christ, more fastidious in the selection of the members of the church militant, than he is in choosing the members of the church triumphant.

Hitherto our attention has been occupied in stating the arguments in favour of mixed communion, and replying to the objections to that practice. It is but justice to the subject and to the reader, before we close the discussion, to touch on another topic.

In every inquiry relating to christian duty, our first concern should undoubtedly be to ascertain the will of the Supreme Legislator; but when this has been done to our satisfaction, we may be allowed to examine the practical tendency of different systems, the effect of which will be, to confirm our preference of that course

of action which we have found most consonant with the oracles of truth. We are far from resting the merits of our cause on the basis of expedience; we are aware that whoever attempts to set the useful in opposition to the true, is misled by false appearances, and that it behoves us on all occasions, fearless of consequences, to yield to the force of evidence. But having in the preceding pages, proved, (we would hope to the satisfaction of the reader,) that the practice of strict communion has no support from scripture or reason, it cannot be deemed improper briefly to inquire into its tendency.

The first effect necessarily resulting from it, is a powerful prejudice against the party which adopts it. When all other denominations find themselves lying under an interdict, and treated as though they were heathens or publicans, they must be more than men not to resent it; or if they regard it with a considerable degree of apathy, it can only be ascribed to that contempt which impotent violence is so apt to inspire. We are incompetent judges of the light in which our conduct appears to those against whom it is directed; but the more frequently we place ourselves in their situation, the less will be our surprise at the indications of alienation and disgust which they may evince. The very appellation of baptist, together with the tenets by which it is designated, becomes associated with the idea of bigotry; nor will it permit the mind which entertains that prejudice, to give an impartial attention to the evidence by which our sentiments are supported. With mingled surprise and indignation they behold us making pretensions which no other denomination of protestants assumes, placing ourselves in an attitude of hostility towards the whole christian world, and virtually claiming to be the only church of Christ upon earth. Fortified as it is, by its claims to antiquity and universality, and combining in its exterior whatever is adapted to dazzle the imagination, and captivate the senses, there is yet nothing in the church of Rome that has excited more indignation and disgust than this very pretension. What then must be the sensation produced, when in the absence of all these advantages, a sect, com-

paratively small and insignificant, erects itself on a solitary eminence from whence it repels the approach of all other christians! The power of prejudice to arrest the progress of inquiry is indeed to be lamented; nothing could be more desirable than that every opinion should, in the first instance, be judged of by its intrinsic evidence, without regard to the conduct of the persons who embrace it; but the strength and independence of mind requisite to such an effort, are rather to be admired than expected. There are few who enter on the investigation of theological questions in that elevated state; secret antipathies or predilections will be sure to instil their venom, and obscure the perception of truth, and the suggestions of reason.

By the stern rejection of the members of all other denominations, until they have embraced our distinguishing tenets, what do we propose to effect—to intimidate or to convince? We can do neither. To intimidate is impossible. while there are others far more numerous than ourselves, ready to receive them with open arms. The hope of producing conviction by such an expedient, is equally groundless and chimerical, since conviction is the result of evidence, and no light whatever can be pretended to be conveyed by interdicting their communion, unless it be that it manifests our intolerance. We propose to extirpate an error, and we plant a prejudice; and instead of attempting to soften and conciliate the minds of our opponents, we inflict a stigma. Professing serious concern that the ordinance of baptism, as it was practised in the first ages, is fallen into neglect, we attempt to revive an unpopular rite, by a mode of procedure, which without the remotest tendency towards the removal of error, or the elucidation of truth, answers no other purpose than to make *ourselves* unpopular.

By this preposterous conduct, we do all in our power to place our pædobaptist brethren beyond the reach of conviction. Since it is unreasonable to expect, however attractive the ministry, that a pious pædobaptist will statedly attend where he must despair of ever becoming a member, and of enjoying the privileges to which every

serious person is supposed to aspire; he attaches himself as a necessary consequence, to a connexion in which there is no such impediment, but where he is certain of hearing nothing but what will foster his prejudices, and confirm his error. Thus he is excluded from the only connexion where the arguments for adult baptism are stated, and is exposed to the constant operation of an opposite species of instruction. The practice which we are reprobating is nearly equivalent to an inscription over the door, Let none but baptists enter within these walls—an admirable expedient truly, for diffusing the baptist sentiments; about as rational as to send a man from London to Constantinople to study the evidences of christianity!

Mr. Kinghorn is delighted with this separation of the baptists from other denominations in the offices of devotion, avowing it as his opinion that no pædobaptist can, without great impropriety, statedly attend the ministry of one of our denomination. If we may judge from what he has written on this subject, he appears less anxious to promote and extend the peculiar tenets of the baptists, than to preserve inviolate their sacred seclusion and solitude. His sentiments on this subject will probably remind the poetical reader of Gray's beautiful description of the bird of night, which

> ———"does to the moon complain
> Of such as, wandering near her secret bowers,
> Molest her ancient solitary reign."

Whatever his intention may be, it must be obvious, that by the policy he recommends, of keeping the baptists and pædobaptists entirely separated from each other, even as hearers of the word, he is strengthening the barriers of party, building up a middle wall of partition, and by cutting off the channels of communication, and the means of conviction, resigning both to the entire and unmitigated operation of their respective systems. Is it possible to imagine anything more calculated to stifle inquiry, to render the public mind stationary, and to perpetuate our divisions to the end of the world? From him who was really solicitous to extend the triumphs of truth, we should expect nothing would be more abhorrent than such a system; he surely would leave nothing

unattempted to break down the rampart of prejudice; and by making the nearest approaches to his opponents consistent with truth, avail himself of all the advantages which a generous confidence seldom fails to bestow, for insinuating his sentiments, and promoting his views.

Of the tendency of mixed communion to promote a more candid inquiry into our principles, it is scarcely possible to doubt; whether it would have the effect of rapidly extending the baptist denomination *as such*, is less certain. For were that practice universally to prevail, the mixture of baptists and pædobaptists in christian societies would probably, ere long, be such, that the appellation of baptist might be found, not so properly applicable to churches as to individuals, while some more comprehensive term might possibly be employed to discriminate the views of collective bodies. But what then? Are we contending for names, or for things? If the effect of a more liberal system shall be found to increase the number of those who return to the primitive practice of baptism, and thus, "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," he must be possessed of a deplorable imbecility and narrowness of mind, who will lament the disappearance of a name, especially when it is remembered that whenever just views on this subject shall become universal, the name by which we are at present distinguished will necessarily cease. An honest solicitude for the restoration of a divine ordinance to its primitive simplicity and purity, is not merely innocent but meritorious; but if the ultimate consequence of such an improvement should be to merge the appellation of a party in that which is derived from the divine Founder of our religion, it is an event which none but a bigot will regret.

It were well, however, if the evil resulting from the practice of strict communion, were confined to its effect on other denominations. If I am not much mistaken, it exerts a pernicious influence on our own. Were it consistent with propriety, it would be easy to adduce exceptions; individuals have come within the narrow range of my own observation, whose temperament has been so happy, that they have completely surmounted

the natural tendency of their principles, combining the greatest candour towards pædobaptists, with a conscientious refusal of their communion. Such instances, however, must, in the nature of things, be rare. Generally speaking, the adoption of a narrow and contracted theory will issue in a narrow and contracted mind. It is too much to expect that a habit of treating all other christians as aliens from the fold of Christ, and unworthy of a participation of the privileges of his church, can be generally unaccompanied with an asperity of temper, a proneness to doubt the sincerity, to censure the motives, and depreciate the virtues of those whom they are accustomed to treat with so much rigour. Conceiving themselves to be a highly privileged class, as the only legitimate members of his church, they are almost inevitably exposed to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; and founding their separation, not on that which distinguishes the followers of Christ from the world, but on a point in which christians dissent from each other, they are naturally tempted to attach superlative importance to the grounds of difference.

The history of the present controversy affords a melancholy confirmation of these remarks; for the few who have ventured to appear on the liberal side of the question have, for the most part, been assailed by ungenerous insinuations, and odious personalities. Their claim to be considered as baptists is very reluctantly conceded, and the part they have taken has been imputed to the love of popularity, or to some still more unworthy motive. Some churches, in their zeal for strict communion, have even lost sight of their own principles, and substituted the doctrine opposed in these pages as a term of admission, instead of the ordinance of baptism. Others have refused the privilege of occasional communion to such as have been known to sit down with pædobaptists at the Lord's table.

Leaving, however, to those to whom it may be more grateful, the unwelcome office of exposing the infirmities of their brethren, let me close this subject by one more remark. In addition to all the other reasons for retracing our steps, we may, with great propriety, allege the spirit

of the times, the genius of the age, distinguished, as it is, beyond all former example, by the union of christians in the promotion of a common cause, and their merging their minor differences in the cultivation of great principles, and the pursuit of great objects. Instead of confining themselves, each to the defence of his own citadel, they are sallying forth in all directions, in order to make a powerful and combined attack on the kingdom of darkness. The church of Christ, no longer the scene of intestine warfare among the several denominations into which it is cantoned and divided, presents the image of a great empire, composed of distant, but not hostile provinces, prepared to send forth its combatants, at the command of its invisible Sovereign, to invade the dominions of Satan, and subdue the nations of the earth. The weapons of its warfare have already made themselves felt in the East and in the West; and wherever its banner is unfurled, it gathers around it, without distinction of name or sect, "the called, the chosen, the faithful," who, at the heart-thrilling voice of Him whose "vesture is dipped in blood," and who goes forth "conquering and to conquer," rush to the field, unmindful of every distinction but that of his friends and foes, and too eager for the combat to ask any other question, than, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" And is it possible, after mingling thus their counsels, their efforts, their prayers, and standing side by side, in the thickest of the conflict, in coming up "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," for them to turn their backs on each other, and refuse to unite at that table which is covered with the memorials of his love, and the fruits of his victory? No. As we hope, when the warfare of time is accomplished, and these mortal tabernacles, in which it is performed, shall be dissolved, to celebrate a never-ending feast, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the whole army of the faithful of every age, from every clime, and of every tongue, let us begin by feasting together here, to present a specimen of that harmony and love, which are at once the element and the earnest of eternal felicity.

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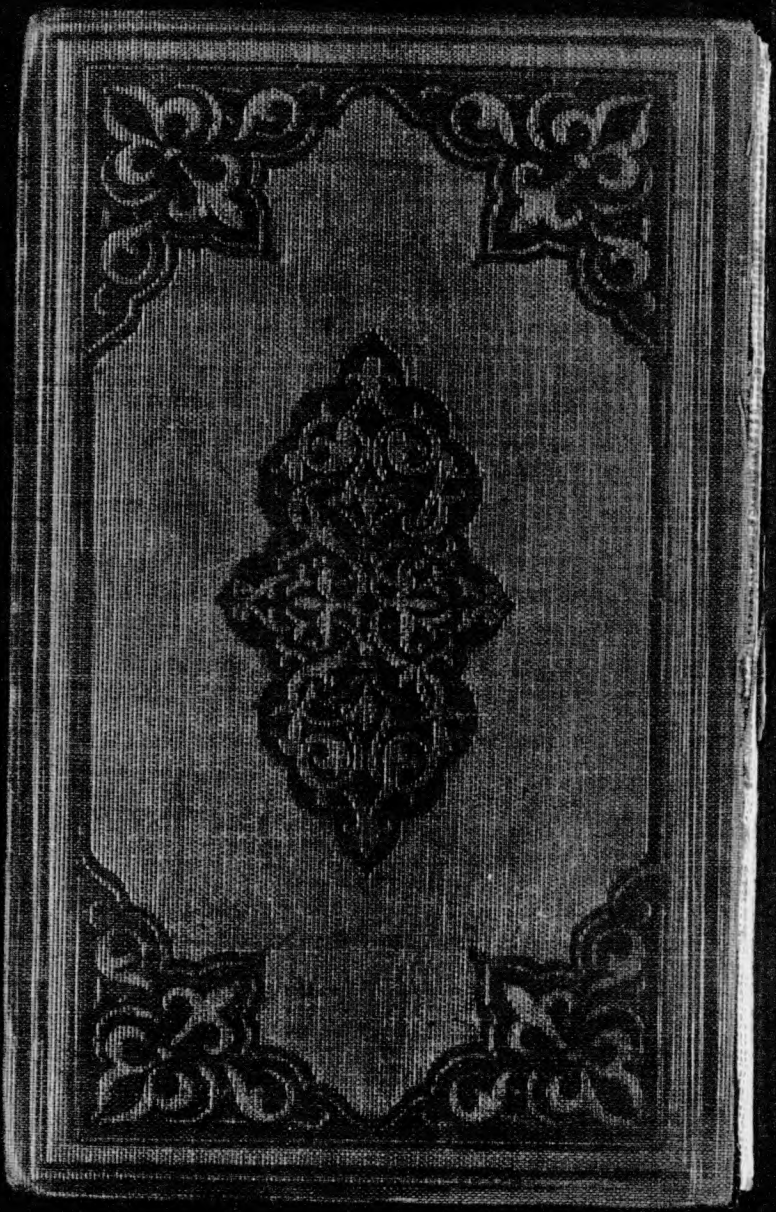
57

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